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CHAPTER V.

"WHAT a bustling day it has been!" said Bertha, as she helped to fasten Amy Gordon's white muslin dress. She was invited with Miss Price to dinner.

"I wonder if every day will be like it," said Amy. "I fancy so from what one hears and sees. How delightful it would be, but for Mrs. Jones!"

"I don't know," sighed Bertha; "I think I should be happier if all were more regular, as I expected to find it; besides, I dread being asked to dinner."

"Why, dear? are you shy?"

"Yes; and besides ——"

"Tell me; you seem low-spirited to-night." To Amy's surprise Bertha suddenly turned away, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Bertha! dear Bertha! please tell me what it is? Can I help you? can I comfort you?"

"It is nothing; do not ask me."

"But I do so want to know; does it dishearten you? are you unhappy about it all? Do tell me, dear."

And Amy knelt down beside her friend, and put her arms round her tenderly.

"You are very kind to me, Amy; I feel as if I had known you all my life."

"Try to imagine that you have, and let me make you happier."

"I will tell you, only keep my secret. You know that Mr. Leslie who arrived to-day?"

"I have seen him — yes."

"We were engaged."

"*Were* engaged? and not now?"

"I hardly like to tell you; do not think badly of him, but he has never written or come to see me since we became poor."

"I think badly of him! I think he is a villain!"

Bertha pushed her friend away from her.

"You know nothing of him," she said, with flashing eyes. Amy changed as quickly.

"It may have been accidental," she said. Bertha shook her head, and two large tears streamed down her cheeks again.

"You think not?"

"I think it was his relations; they were very anxious he should marry some one with money. I do not know why, for he is very well off; there was some heiress they were always teasing him about."

"Could it be Miss Murch?"

"Don't say so!" cried Bertha, passionately; "don't, please! the same idea has struck me also. Now, dear Amy, help me; warn me if you can, always, so that I may avoid his seeing me."

"Would it not be better for you, dear, to see him and get it over? Think of the constant watching; it will wear you out."

"Oh no, no!"

"There is the gong! Shall I send an excuse? shall I stay? I cannot bear leaving you like this."

"No, go; thank you, dear Amy: you promise, then, to help me?"

"I will indeed."

"Perhaps you are not aware, Miss Gordon, that the bell has rung," said a prim voice; and Miss Price, in a long-waisted black silk gown, adorned with a huge mosaic brooch, entered the room.

"I am quite ready; how good of you to come for me!" and the two went down-stairs. The moon had risen, and was looking through the attic windows. Bertha could see what a lovely night it was; she had been at work all day, and felt a longing for a few moments out of doors to cool her hot eyes and crimson cheeks. She put on a hat and cloak and stole down-stairs. At the head of the great staircase she paused, and, looking through, saw the long line of couples going into the dining-room. Sir Joseph headed the procession making some loud observation about the weather; two and two they passed on: now a voice struck on her ear, which made her grasp the bannister tightly—a voice she knew well, speaking in low, clear tones; she could not hear what he said, she could not see his face, but she saw that the lady on his arm was dressed in pale pink silk, that she had cherries in her hair, and gold bangles on her arms; in another moment she would be out of sight—no! she drops her fan, stoops to pick it up, turns her face, the dining-room lights fall upon it—it is fair, and bright, and rosy, but with such pouting lips and discontented mien!—it was Mary Murch.

"She is *not* a nice girl," said Bertha to

herself; "one would think she had a bad temper." Bertha's aching little heart was as nearly being spiteful as its gentle nature would allow it to be.

The broad terrace in front of the house lay in one sheet of silver moonlight, the water in the fountains plashed lazily, there was not a breath of air. Bertha wandered across the terrace to the shrubberies, enjoying the keen, still cold; her thoughts were in a tumult, and her body weary with the unwonted exertion of the day; she would not let herself cry again, but she felt very sad.

"Who is it?" said a figure suddenly emerging from the bushes.

"It is I; how you startled me, Miss Gwendoline!"

"Do not call me miss."

"Very well. Are you out alone?"

"Yes; trying to get a breath of air after the hot kitchen and the hotter Mrs. Jones."

"I am afraid she is very trying, from what Amy says; but you have such high spirits to pull you through."

"High spirits flag sometimes; mine are at a low ebb to-night."

"So are mine."

"I thought so by the sound of your voice. Come and walk with me; this is such a nice quiet shrubbery, so close to the house that we are quite safe. What a lovely night!"

"Yes; is it not?"

"It is a pity we have not each a tall cavalier with velvet doublet and flowing hair to walk with us, it would be so romantic. Did you ever think about having a lover all to yourself?"

"No."

"Your 'no' is so conscious, it means yes. I hate talking about these things, but I can't help it to-night. It must be very nice to be loved."

"It must indeed."

"But I should like not to care about him at all."

"Oh, would you?"

"Yes; have him my slave and lover, and not to care about him in the least—it is so irritating."

"What is?"

"Nothing; only when people won't see things, and are blind as bats and obstinate as mules, and believe all one says."

"I like to be believed."

"So do I—of course I do. What nonsense we are talking!"

Bertha gave a little laugh.

"I think I would rather have a certain amount of affection for my cavalier."

"If you had, he would not care for you."

The tears rushed to Bertha's eyes.

"Do you think so?" she said.

"I do think, seriously, that the world would be much happier and calmer without strong emotions of any sort."

"Oh, so do I!"

"And much more intolerable," added Gwendoline, pinching off a bunch of whin-pods, and cracking them with a loud-sounding pop.

"Do you like service, Gwendoline?"

"Pretty well; it does as well as anything else; but I am not sure about the rights of it."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean this: every class has its own particular rights and privileges—its own field for ambition; we are usurping the legitimate rights of the lower classes."

"I don't understand."

"This is all theory, my dear, so take it for what it is worth; but listen to what I think about it. We born ladies are born with advantages of breeding, and almost always of education, which give us an opportunity of exercising any talent we may possess. We may become artists, or musicians, or highly-paid governesses, with a prospect of a school for young ladies some day; or we may attract individuals to marry us. The Royal Academy, St. James's Hall, the Ladies' Seminary in St. John's Wood, or the School of Art—under royal patronage,—all these are the legitimate aims of poor ladies. Perhaps they are few who attain them; but then, after all, there must be a great deal of pudding to comparatively a few plums."

"You are not very clear."

"Am I not? I wish I could be. But what I feel is this,—that domestic service is the property of the lower orders; they, in it, can begin at the lowest step; the dirtiest little housemaid may hope one day to be treading the room in black silks and a gold chain; the pantry-boy to be waiting in broadcloth and a white tie. It is the advantage given to them, the education bestowed on them, and they have as much right to their field of ambition as we have to ours. It distresses me to hear the complaints on every side from all the mothers in the cottages that their daughters cannot get places."

"But ought we to go on as we are?"

"Not forever, Bertha—not forever."

"It does not do to build on the future, to make *chateaux en Espagne*," said Bertha.

"Why not?"

"Surely it is a dangerous habit."

"I cannot see that. On the contrary, it seems to me one of the privileges of human beings over brute beasts to dream dreams and build castles. Oh! what would life be without it?"

"I claim exemption for dogs from the accusation of not being able to enjoy *chateaux en Espagne*. Have you not seen dogs dreaming over an imaginary chase?"

"Past, not future."

"That is conjecture only. I have seen them also get up, waggle coaxingly across the room, lick their lips, and sit down again; and at such moments, seen dinner actually written in their honest eyes,—and such a dinner! so excellent that it could exist only on the table of a *chateau en Espagne*."

"After that retract your condemnation, and agree with me that it is lawful to enjoy the gift of imagination to the full."

"Granted, if you are a busy person; if you are an idle one, certainly not."

"I accept the compromise, for it is a wise one. I almost think we ought to be going in, Bertha, now, or we may catch cold."

"Yes, we had better go in; but I am sorry to do so. Look at those black clouds with their edges broken into masses of silver foam."

The two girls walked slowly homewards, their shadows stretching on the terrace to an enormous length.

CHAPTER VI.

A CARRIAGE came crashing through the gravel to Murch Hall, just as the great hall-clock struck twelve o'clock. The door was flung open, and a flood of hospitable light poured into the portico, and a crowd of eager faces filled the hall.

"What news? what news?" they cried.

"Let me out," said a deep voice; and from the midst of bundles of shawls and rugs emerged the tall form of Miss Highclere.

"Please tell me the result," cried Lady Goodchild; but Miss Highclere only waved her back and stalked through the whole party to the drawing-room. There was no thought of greetings or welcomes, only who could follow her quickest.

Arrived in the drawing-room, Miss Highclere planted herself with her back to the fire, with a very grim look on the grey face which showed under something which was neither a bonnet nor a helmet.

"Well," she said slowly, "we have lost the seat."

"Lost the seat!"

"Yes, lost the seat."

There was a profound silence; then Lady Goodchild said, *les larmes dans la voix*, "But what has my poor daughter done?"

"It was that scene in the House that did it," said Miss Highclere, wrathfully. "I always knew the constituents would never forget it. I always said so."

"You never said so before."

"Yes, I did."

"Then if you had acted the part of a true friend, you would have advised my daughter not to stand again."

"I did, but she would not listen."

"Well," said Lady Murch, "it is no use reproaching each other now. Be so good, Miss Highclere, as to tell us the reason of Mrs. Lane's defeat."

"I repeat; it was the result of that unfortunate scene in the House."

"What scene?" said Sir Frederick.

"She had been asking the House night after night for an opportunity of bringing in her Compulsory Adult Education to a Certain Standard of the Females of the Upper Classes Bill. She had spent months of her time upon framing the bill, and had thrown all her energies and hopes into it. The day was given at last; she made her speech admirably, and the bill was negatived without a division."

"It was a cruel shame," murmured Lady Goodchild.

"The chances of war," said her husband, testily.

"Then occurred the scene which has led to her defeat," said Miss Highclere, solemnly.

"But what did she do?"

"She flew at the member of the Opposition who sat opposite to her, exclaiming, 'I saw you laughing at me!' she tore off her bonnet and threw it on the ground, and then went off into a frightful fit of hysterics."

"She was worn out and over-excited from extreme fatigue," said Lady Goodchild. "She had not been in bed before three o'clock for a week past, and had to take a large glass of sal-volatile before she went down to the House that night, poor child."

"Then," said Miss Highclere, proudly, "we had an opportunity of seeing the superiority of the nerves of the female members to those of the male. I was in the lobby when she was carried out perfectly rigid and shrieking fearfully, and I saw one gentleman after another come out and drink a glass of brandy-and-water;

half of them did so at least, and all looking quite pale: none of the female members cared in the least."

"Well, it is a great disappointment," said Lady Murch, lighting a bedroom candle; "but it is very late, and you look very tired, Miss Highclere."

"I look tired! I! I am impervious to fatigue; but I have no objection to retire, for I have at least a dozen letters to write to-night."

And the party dispersed for the night.

Guests came and went with such constant change and rapidity at Murch Hall that the lady-helps scarcely had a moment to themselves; only Miss Highclere, George Leslie, and the Reids outstayed them all.

One day an unusual number arrived, and Lady Murch determined to amuse them all by dancing in the evening, and she invited all the household, with the exception of Mrs. Jones and the French lady's-maid, to get their work over and join in the evening's amusement.

Gwendoline, whose spirits had risen again to overflowing pitch, went singing about her work in her high sweet voice —

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail,

"There's a porpoise close behind me, and he's treading on my tail:

See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance;

They are waiting on the shingle — won't you come and join the dance?"

A sudden and unexpected chorus burst from pantry, stillroom, and passage —

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?

Entering into the fun of it, Mary Murch, Mrs. Reid, and Sir Joseph came into the room. Amy in the stillroom went on singing —

You can really have no notion how delightful it will be,

When they take us up and throw us with the lobsters out to sea.

To everybody's surprise, Sir Joseph suddenly broke out in a loud gruff voice —

But the snail replied, "Too far, too far," and gave a look askance,

Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not "join the dance."

It was irresistible: the doors flew open; Amy ran in with her hands covered with flour, Mr. Fox and Mr. Herbert, coatless, the latter busily cleaning a teapot; merry little Susie Gray from the scullery, all joined together.

Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.

Mrs. Jones fairly wrung her hands.

"There's veal, Sir Joseph," she said, pitiously—"there's roast veal, and you know what a delicate thing that is, and me not knowing which way to turn with the noise. Miss Gwendoline, do try and do them potato-chips; and, Miss Amy, that there tart will be a black burning cinder."

"I'm off, I'm off," said Sir Joseph; "and we mustn't do it again. Fox, I came down to speak to the colonel."

"He's in the pantry, Sir Joseph."

"I want his advice about the young plantations," and he went off to find him.

"You want butter, don't you?" said Mrs. Jones.

"Yes, there on that plate; thanks."

"Bless and save us, not so much! You're off your head to-day, Miss Gwendoline."

"It only wants a very little bit," said Herbert, demurely.

"You be off to your lamps, sir, if you please."

"I have done my work, and am come to help in the kitchen."

"We want no help in the kitchen, sir."

"I took the situation on the understanding that I might help in the kitchen."

"Well, take and rub down them dressers; but who's a-doing of your work?"

"Macdown; I've done everything for him for the last week, as he wanted to finish his article for the *Quarterly*, and now he is taking my duty. One good turn deserves another." And he began to scrub lustily.

"I suppose you have not yet told Gwendoline the sad and painful history of your reduced circumstances?" said Mary, in a low voice.

"No, she won't speak or take any notice of me, so I won't speak to her till she comes and asks me in the pantry."

"Nonsense."

"I won't."

"You are very blind."

He would have said something eagerly but she went away.

"By-the-by, Mr. Fox," said Gwendoline, suddenly, "I have mended your green baize apron; it is in that top drawer; it was rather a troublesome job."

"Oh, thank you."

"Mine is very much torn too," said Mr. Herbert. "It wants mending sadly."

"If you will put it here when you go up-stairs, I will tell Jones to see that Susie mends it. Mr. Fox, I see you are idle; did you ever pluck a duck? The char-

women always do it, but they have so much to do to-day that it will be very kind of you to undertake it."

"With all my heart, if Miss Murch will give me something to put the beast's feathers in. How shall I steady it?"

"Oh, put the poker across its feet to hold it down."

And Mary handed him the poker.

"Did you ever see such a melancholy fellow as that George Leslie?" said Mr. Fox, pulling away anxiously at the duck.

"He looks as if he had one foot in the grave," said Mr. Herbert.

"I say, you fellows!" shouted a voice, "can't you come and help? It is half past one, and I am miles away from the end of all there is to be done."

"One good turn deserves another," answered Herbert.

"But Fox might come. I say, Fox, do come; the governor has carried off the colonel, and I have his work as well as my own."

No answer.

"Fox, I say!"

"'Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!'"

"Come and help."

"I can't come, I'm plucking a beast of a bird, and the more feathers I take off, the more it puts on."

"Stuff!"

"No, it can't be stuffed till it's plucked all over."

"Then you, Herbert."

"I'm scrubbing."

"The deuce you are! well, somebody must help me," and the very fat form of the valet, Mr. Macdown, appeared at the door with tucked-up sleeves and a leather apron.

"Miss Murch, you are doing nothing; could you not scrub the tables, and send me Herbert?"

"Needs must where the devil drives," said Herbert, throwing down his brushes and lounging away after the valet.

"I am going to see what Amy is doing," said Mrs. Reid. She found the little pastry-maid hard at work surrounded by exquisite little game-pies, open tarts, round tarts, square tarts.

"I am in my element," she cried, gaily; "look at my shapes and designs—cruel, that any one should eat them! Those two are from Villemín, these others from the '*Recueil des Faïences Italiennes*,' that one is Pugin, and that lovely rabbit pie is from a scrap in Street's '*Architecture of Spain*.' I consider that moulding a *chef-d'œuvre*!"

"It is indeed; but how do you get hold of all these things?"

"Oh, I know them well, I am so fond of designs. Do you notice that pie? The colouring of it gave me a great deal of trouble: a touch of brown to give the mellow effect of age, a dash of yellow lichen with the tiniest scrap of egg, and a wealth of weeds at the top represented by this parsley."

"It is most artistic. I hope the interior—the animal element—is as successful as the mental one."

Amy looked anxious. "Don't make me nervous," she said. "I know that sometimes when I have spent too much care and thought on the architecture, I have failed within: but Hannah made the rabbit part; so even if my walls be uneatable, the contents are sure to be admirable."

"What a number of them to-day!"

"They are for supper after the dance," said Amy, gleefully—"oh, how I love dancing!"

"Is Bertha coming this evening?"

"I don't know; I am afraid I shall not be able to persuade her to come—she will shut herself up."

"Is she not well?"

"Yes, she is well, but she is so dreadfully shy; it would do her all the good in the world if she could be persuaded to come."

"We would set her and George Leslie to dance together."

"Why?" Amy started.

"Because both being so forlorn they would suit each other."

"Well, I wish she would dance with any one."

"She never walks or drives with all of us: does she never go out at all?"

"Yes, early in the morning, any time when she can be sure of being alone."

"I suspect that she is a proud, unsociable girl."

"Oh no, she is such a darling; but she is very shy and unreasoning."

Meanwhile the object of their conversation was at work, dusting Lady Murch's bedroom; it was a pretty room, full of old china and valuable knickknacks, and Miss Price never allowed any one to dust it excepting herself and Bertha, of whom she had conceived a very high opinion.

Bertha was standing before the fireplace replacing a beautiful Dresden vase, when Lady Murch came in.

"I hoped I should find you here, my dear," she said, "for I wanted to speak to you."

Bertha stood before her, twisting her little feather-broom; one curl of her pretty brown hair had escaped, and hung on her

shoulder in a fashion to which it had once been accustomed.

"My dear," said Lady Murch, seating herself, "I wanted to tell you that I wish you to come to the dance to-night—now, do not begin at once to refuse. You shall stay by me or by Mrs. Lurgan if you are shy, and there are only about twenty people coming who are not in the house, and I really wish you to appear."

"I cannot—indeed I cannot."

"You will do so to please me, I am sure. I have been distressed to notice how you shrink away by yourself instead of mingling with the family in the right and proper way; and I cannot allow it to continue."

"Indeed! indeed!"

"I have ordered a little white muslin gown for you, just like Amy's," went on Lady Murch, severely; "so I hope for no excuse."

Bertha burst into tears.

"Now, my dear, excuse me; but this is really silly."

"Oh, please forgive me—you are so kind; but indeed, indeed, if you make me come down-stairs, I must——"

"Must what?"

"I must leave you."

"We will talk of that another time," said Lady Murch, rising much displeased; and she added as she left the room, "Remember I shall expect to see you to-night. Hysterical nonsense," she said to herself, as she went down-stairs, "unworthy of my household." Two voices caught her ear and made her smile as she passed—

"I will wear my pink, Agatha."

"You look a perfect guy in pink at your age; why can't you dress as best becomes you?"

"I am the best judge of that."

"You are not."

"I am."

"I tell you, you are not."

"And I tell you I won't be put upon," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VII.

"RING, ring, ring! Do you hear that bell, Mrs. Lurgan?"

"Yes, Miss Price, that is Sir Joseph's bell."

"Again! that is the fourth time. What can the men be about, and what can Sir Joseph want at this hour?"

"I know what he wants, Miss Price—he wants to dress; they put off dressing until after dinner, all except my lady herself, who called Sir Joseph a fool—an old fool, she said—because he was too much

absorbed in a game of chess with Mr. Fox to — There it is again!"

"Really, one of us must go; I suppose the gentlemen are dressing. Could you go, Mrs. Lurgan?"

"How can I, all unhooked? couldn't you go?"

"Not with hair down: let me see — perhaps one of the girls may be ready. There it is again! Bertha, Bertha!"

"Do you hear the governor's bell ringing, Macdown?" said Fox, putting a face covered with soap, and a hand holding a razor, into his friend's door.

"Of course I do; but what's a fellow to do?" and he exhibited a face in a similar condition. "Herbert's gone down ever so long ago; happily he's quicker than we are. There it is again, drat it! as Mrs. Jones would say."

Bertha answered Miss Price's call, looking very pretty, dressed in clouds of spotless muslin; her eyes looked all the softer for the tears she found so much difficulty in suppressing.

"I have been hurrying, Miss Price — I will run at once; the Miss Burdens have been ready half an hour, but they did not consider it proper to go."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Miss Price, "I would have gone myself but for my hair. There it is again!" and Bertha sped away.

She knocked at Sir Joseph's door. "Come in," said a wrathful voice, and she ventured timidly in.

"There is nothing put out," he began; then suddenly, "I beg your pardon."

"I am so sorry," said Bertha; "but I suppose the gentlemen are dressing, and —"

"But they might have given me hot water at least, and put out some of my things. I have no socks — I have no white tie — I have no waistcoat — I have no —" he stopped abruptly.

"Here are your ties," said Bertha, briskly, "and I will fetch hot water in half a minute. Here are a pair of black silk socks — gloves. Your coat is not brushed; I will run down and get Mr. Herbert to do it. Give me the can, and I will get the water first."

"Indeed I cannot let you do it. Show me where to get it."

"No, no; I won't be a moment," and she sped away.

"You are an angel in my distress," said Sir Joseph, as she returned with the steaming can. "Now please don't disturb yourself about my coat, I am sure it will do."

"Oh no, I can get it done directly;" and taking the coat, Bertha ran downstairs. She knew that Herbert would probably be in the drawing-room, superintending the chalking of the floors; so she ran thither, passing through the ante-rooms. The drawing-room floor was evidently just finished, for Herbert, as she supposed, was standing by the fireplace with his back to her: she ran up to him with the coat on her arm.

"Oh, Mr. Herbert!" she began, but stopped suddenly, for she found herself face to face with George Leslie.

"There's the bell again, by George!" said Fox, again putting his head into Mr. Macdown's room.

"It is only half an hour since he rang before. Again! This is too bad. Shall I answer it, or you?"

"Oh, you; I can't get this tie right," and he tore it off and began another. Mr. Fox strolled off as another furious ring pealed through the house.

Sir Joseph had passed from towering passion to despair. "Just look at me," he said; "Lady Murch gone down a quarter of an hour, and I without a coat to my back!"

"Where is your coat, Sir Joseph?"

"The pretty little new housemaid has taken it away."

"What for?"

"To brush. She went half an hour ago, and has never come back; and if it had not been for her, I should have had no hot water or —"

"I brought you hot water myself."

"There was none here."

"But I brought it, I vow!"

"And I vow there was none here."

"Somebody must have bagged it."

"Well, never mind; only do, like a good fellow, go after my coat. Ah! here is the colonel; now I shall get all I want: and with my coat too; where did you find it?"

"I found it on the hearth-rug in the drawing-room," said Colonel Clarence, "and cannot conceive how it got there."

"It is too bad," growled Sir Joseph.

Face to face with George Leslie, Bertha felt all her strength fail her, and she would have turned and fled. What could she do? He was on his knees kissing her hand, pouring out incoherent words.

"Bertha! Bertha! have I found you at last?"

Then she began to cry, and he led her away to the furthest window, where, shaded by the curtains, they could talk quietly, and out came the whole story, — how George had been seized with typhus

fever two days before the ruin came, and was too ill to know anything about it—how his father, more avaricious than honourable, had seen a way of breaking off the engagement, and kept his illness a secret, leaving the Fitzherbert family to believe that the young man was faithless. When he was well again, and had been told the news, he had quarrelled with his father, and gone at once to Mr. Fitzherbert. Bertha's father, however, deeply offended, refused to allow him to reopen communication with his daughter, vowing that she should never be received on sufferance by any man's relations; and as he refused to give him her address, poor George left him in despair and again fell ill. Before he had quite recovered from his second attack, his father died suddenly of apoplexy; and his mother, who had always sympathized with him, again made overtures to Bertha's father, who, however, continued inexorable.

"And now I have found you! found you at last, my beautiful Bertha!" There was such an endless amount of questions and answers to make, so much to say and talk about, that the time seemed to fly. Presently Colonel Clarence came in, but he did not perceive them in the shadow of the window-curtains; he picked up Sir Joseph's coat with an air of great astonishment, and went out.

"I must go now—indeed I must, George; they will be coming to finish lighting the candles, and I must—indeed I must arrange my hair again."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE party all assembled about ten o'clock, and as the dancing was not to begin till half past, Lady Murch proposed having some music in the large drawing-room, emptied of carpet and furniture. It was a luxury to sing in the room, and Mrs. Lurgan's fine contralto voice seemed of twice its natural power. Gwendoline also sang some gay French songs, and the Miss Burdens, after much pressing, performed an Italian duet; then Mr. Herbert was entreated to sing. *Il se fit prier* for some minutes; then, throwing aside hesitation, boldly turned to Gwendoline and begged her to accompany him. Gwendoline agreed, and they went to the piano; there was a sound as of first guests arriving, and she hesitated, turning over the music.

"Is there time?" she said.

"Oh yes, lots. I should like to sing, now that I am actually before the scenes; here is the song I mean to sing."

Gwendoline glanced at it, and flushing scarlet, sat down and began a brilliant prelude.

Herbert's voice was a good well-taught tenor, and he sang with much spirit.

I' sooth, my lady, your yoke is hard,
More hard than I care to bear,
In spite, fair lady, of flashing eyes
And tresses of golden hair.

I love my lady, she knows full well,
But a slave I will not be;
And troth, proud lady, thy haughtiness
Will sever my heart from thee!

At times, my lady, so sweet art thou,
That I cannot burst my chain;
And though I know that thy yoke is hard,
Forthwith I'm a slave again!

But now my lady too far has gone,
I swear that I will be free;
And haply, fair lady, thou'lt weep to find
That I am as proud as thee!

The noise in the ante-room increased to a babel of voices, and Lady Murch and Mary went out to meet them; so that Herbert, finding his finale likely to lose its effect, ran his voice up the scale, gave a long shake on a high falsetto note, and returned to the key-note on a shower of well-executed triplets.

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted Sir Joseph; and in the storm of applause Gwendoline escaped to the drawing-room, which was now beginning to fill. She did not know whether to cry, to laugh, or to be indignant; but a tumult of feelings excited her, till she looked quite beautiful.

"May I have the pleasure of this dance?" asked Mr. Reid, drawing on his white gloves. The music was beginning, and Amy's feet were dancing already.

"May I have the pleasure?"

"Are you engaged for this dance?"

Now all were whirling away. Even Sir Joseph was tempted to join by the baby face and disappointed look of the little sixteen-year-old Susie Gray. Never was there such a merry dance, never a better partner than fat Mr. Macdown, who danced more lightly and airily than anybody in the room, and who, as Captain Lawrence elegantly expressed it afterwards, "never turned a hair." Valse succeeded valse; lancers were few and far between; quadrilles were left out altogether, and the evening went on.

"May I have this dance at least, Miss Gwendoline?" said Herbert, rather savagely.

"So sorry, I am engaged."

"The next, then?"

Gwendoline looked innocently at her card.

"I am afraid."

"Third, fourth, fifth."

"Had you not better ask me again?"

"I am engaged for the next five — no, six."

"To be treated again as you have treated me the whole evening — I will not have it. Will you tell me who you dance this with?"

"Mr. Macdown."

"Oh, never mind him!"

"The best dancer in the room; ask me to throw over any one else."

"The next, then?"

"Lord Firton."

"Well, forget him."

"A stranger — impossible! And after that Sir Joseph; of course I could not throw him over, — and then."

"This is our dance, Miss Gwendoline!"

The music struck up one of the newest waltzes, and the couple whirled away. Herbert folded his arms and stood gloomily leaning against the wall.

"If you are not dancing, Mr. Herbert," said Lady Murch, "would you mind just having one waltz with Miss Price? I think she would like it."

"With all the pleasure in life." Lady Murch sailed away. The instant she was out of sight Herbert fled; he ran down the back-stairs, meaning to lie *perdu* until the dance was safely over.

"Another dance, please, Bertha."

"But I am sure people will remark it, George. Look at Lady Murch; she is watching us now. Oh, what a hypocrite she must think me!"

"Never mind if she does."

"But I should not like to lose her good opinion, she has been so very kind to me."

"We will ask her to come and see us some day. Come out into the ante-room for a little fresh air;" and they strolled away together.

In the further ante-room tea was placed. A door in this room led into the dining-room, which was not yet opened officially for supper. Bertha and George Leslie found this room empty, already arranged with cold refreshments, and only half lighted. At the end of the room they seated themselves on a low sofa, glad to get out of the gay scene for a few minutes alone. They were occupied with each other entirely when the door opened softly and Gwendoline came in. She started when she saw them, and a look of surprise came over her face.

"I was going down to see if I could

help Amy," she said; "Lady Murch wishes to have supper at once."

"I think everything is ready," said Bertha, trying to hide her confusion.

"Amy is gone down, so I think I will go also," said Gwendoline; and she ran down the back-stairs, and Bertha and George once more forgot all embarrassment, and plunged again into the old story that is ever new.

Gwendoline ran down-stairs to the kitchen. The sound of the music was ringing in her ears; perhaps it was that that made her cheeks so flushed and her eyes so brilliant. Amy was not in the kitchen; no one was there except Mrs. Jones, who was asleep before the fire, looking so marvellously peaceful that Gwendoline felt positively startled. She had left the kitchen-door wide open, and she could hear some one stirring in the pantry, even coughing a sort of cough which to her overstrained ears seemed to be significant. She stood before the kitchen-fire trying to make up her mind, to bend her proud spirit. She found herself growing more and more indignant, twisting her gloves round and round.

Mrs. Jones stirred in her sleep. Gwendoline went half-way to the door, then back again. Her heart beat so fast she felt as if she could scarcely breathe. "He had no business to say it; I won't go to the pantry," she said to herself; and strengthening her resolve she turned and left the kitchen. Half-way up-stairs she heard the door at the top open: some one was coming down; in one moment it would be too late. She flew down-stairs again without pausing to think, burst open the pantry-door, and panting and defiant stood before Herbert Montgomery.

"I have come," she said; "and what now?"

Sir Joseph and Miss Highclere were treading a measure together. Her black satin rattled over the floor with stiffness; her severe features were unbent, as she would herself express it, and wore a kindly smile.

"It is really a pleasure and encouragement to me, dear Sir Joseph," she was saying, "to see the admirable way in which this household succeeds. I see here the beginning of many and many a happy and contented year for yourselves, your one offspring, and your helps. All is in such perfect harmony — ages and occupations so well assorted, — I congratulate you upon having succeeded in putting your establishment on a footing likely to last with

comfort and happiness as long as this mortal coil ——” She paused.

“I hope so, Miss Highclere,” said Sir Joseph. “It is very pleasant to see how the young things are enjoying themselves to-night.”

“This dance over, Sir Joseph, I strongly advise a period of quiet hard work, sobriety, and tranquillity; I will speak to Lady Murch about it.”

“Do; she always is so happy to follow any advice she esteems so highly.”

They made the grand chain, and stood side by side.

“There is the supper-bell, Miss Highclere. Allow me to take you to the dining-room.”

Amy’s architectural designs were much admired and duly discussed. The fruit was beautiful, the soup excellent; and the guests, duly warmed and replenished, began to take their departure, saying as they did so that they had never before enjoyed an evening so much. The clock struck three as the last guest was about to depart. Lady Murch had a note to write which she was anxious to send by one of her guests, and she went in to her boudoir to do so. Just as she had finished it, Mr. Fox came in, begging her to be so very kind as to wait for him half a moment, as he wished to speak to her. He carried off the note.

CHAPTER IX.

A LOW fire burnt in Lady Murch’s boudoir as she sat over it waiting till the head-footman came back.

“I am so sorry to have kept you, Lady Murch,” he said; “and it was awfully good of you to wait. The fact is, circumstances have altered with me, and I wanted to take the earliest opportunity of telling you that I must give up your service, and ——”

A knock at the door interrupted him.

“Come in,” said Lady Murch. “Mr. Fox,” she said, holding out her hand to him as Herbert came in, “I am very, very sorry; we will talk of this another time.” Herbert started, and looked inquiringly at Fox.

“Yes,” said Lady Murch, answering his look, “I am grieved to lose Mr. Fox.”

“Lady Murch, I hope it will not put you to inconvenience,” exclaimed Herbert; “Fox really must stay on, for, indeed, I must positively leave in a month; most important reasons.”

“I don’t know what I shall do,” said Lady Murch. “Perhaps we may be able to settle something to-morrow; it is so very late now. Another knock!”

Gwendoline and Bertha both came in, looking so conscious and rosy that Lady Murch threw up her hands.

“Now, don’t say that you are come to give me up also; don’t say it, please!”

Half laughing, half crying, the whole story came out. Lady Murch could say nothing; she let them have their say, and then sent them all away, and went upstairs half disturbed, half delighted with all that had occurred.

She was in her bedroom, dressed in her white dressing-gown, when once more the door flew open and Mary came in. She threw herself on her knees, hiding her face in her mother’s lap, exclaiming —

“Oh mamma, mamma! I shall never, never be happy again unless I marry the footman!”

“What will your papa say?”

“He is so pleased! Do, mamma, say yes!”

Her daughter gone, Lady Murch was not yet to be allowed to go to rest. She was just about to get into bed, when once more her door opened, and there entered three figures, tall, prim, clad in white dressing-gowns and frilled nightcaps. Hand in hand they advanced to her, weeping. They said —

“We have heard all, dear, dear, dear Lady Murch, and we have come to tell you that I, Agatha Burden; I, Selina Price; and I, Amelia Burden, will never, never leave you.”

The following morning, as soon as she was down-stairs, after breakfasting in her bedroom, Lady Murch sent for Colonel Clarence.

All the high spirits were subdued, partly by fatigue and partly by the serious nature of all that had occurred.

All the morning private interviews were going on, and one after another those that had given warning were sent for. Mrs. Jones, who knew nothing, declared rapturously that things were righting at last, that her kitchen-helps were learning to keep themselves to themselves, and she might hope for better times, so quietly and steadily the kitchen-work was done.

Colonel Clarence had fortified himself with all the information he could obtain for Lady Murch. He pleaded for forgiveness for Herbert Montgomery, the greatest culprit of all, acknowledging that it was very wrong; a wild game altogether that he had played, but that Lawrence was quite as much to blame. It turned out afterwards that the character and recommendation were for quite a different person — a certain Jacob Herbert, a decrepit

young man, who had hitherto failed in everything he had undertaken; but a ten-pound note and a promise of more had induced the youth to allow Herbert Montgomery to slip into his place. He pleaded his own cause, the determination he had made to win Gwendoline, who in former days had refused him twice, and the difficulty of approaching her in any other way. And Lady Murch was forced to forgive him, especially as her own husband was charmed with the story, which awoke a long-dormant spirit of romance in his breast. Fox was so great a favourite with them all that every one was pleased with his engagement to the daughter of the house, notwithstanding his want of fortune. And George Leslie made his pretty betrothed more than happy by undertaking to finish her beloved brothers' education at Eton and Cambridge.

"There is only one little face that is very sad to-day," continued the old colonel.

"I am sorry to hear that. Whose is it?" said Lady Murch.

"It is little Amy Gordon, the pastry-maid, who will be left behind. But Mac-down has been throwing so much energy into comforting her that I cannot help thinking——"

"Stop, stop, stop!" cried Lady Murch, holding her ears—"tell me no more."

"I was only going to say that with Sir Joseph's interest, that post in the British Museum——"

But Lady Murch was gone; and in her place, facing the bewildered colonel, stood the helmeted form of Miss Highclere.

"Good-bye, Colonel Clarence," she said; "I am just going."

"There is an old proverb about a falling house," murmured the colonel. She did not hear rightly.

"Did you ask the reason of my abrupt departure?" she asked, grimly. "It is because I consider the whole concern to have turned out a perfect *fiasco*."

A DOUBTING HEART.

BY MISS KEARY,

AUTHOR OF "CASTLE DALY," "OLDBURY," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

IDLE TEARS.

"WELL, Alma, I really think that at last I have earned a few minutes' rest."

The speaker of this sentence was not, as might be supposed, a weary sempstress in an attic, hushing the click of her machine, as it completed the last stitch in her long, long day's tale of work, or a washer-woman in a cellar wringing the soap-suds from her wrinkled arms, or a governess, whose charges had just been borne off to bed. It was a handsome, matronly lady, in a black velvet dress, who, suiting her action to her words, sank down into a well-cushioned chair by a glowing fire in a London drawing-room. The last visitor had been shown out, the footman had disappeared with the afternoon tea-tray, the doors of the inner drawing-room were shut, and the curtains drawn across; but there was something beyond even these tokens of quiet, that combined to fill the room just then with a subtle atmosphere of repose. There was a suggestion, though one could not precisely say where it lurked, that this delightful stillness succeeded a commotion of some sort. It might be given by some unusually festive arrangements of the furniture of the room, or

by occasional sounds of hurrying feet and clacking tongues that came up from the lower regions. Alma read it most plainly in the radiant self-satisfaction that shone in her mother's face, and seemed to surround her whole person with an *aura* of congratulation and conscious well-doing. Only for an instant did her lace cap touch the back of her chair, the next her head was erect again, and her face turned to her daughter with an alert expression on it, which told Alma that the discussion of yesterday's events, that had been going on since morning, and of which she herself was sick at heart, was about to be opened again in some new phase.

"Do you know, my dear Alma," Lady Rivers began, "I really can't yet take in the thought that only yesterday at three o'clock Constance left us—Constance and her husband. Now the excitement is all over, we shall begin to miss the dear child dreadfully. I wonder I don't feel it more, but of course I shall now that all is over."

"I hope not, mamma."

"But I shall. A mother must feel the loss of her daughter, however satisfactory the cause of the separation may be. Do you know, Alma, I fancied Lady Forest was a little surprised that the leave-taking between myself and Constance passed so quietly. *She* cried when she said 'good-bye' to her son, I observed, but then she is a widow; I am sure I hope she won't argue from my self-control, that Constance is not a great loss to me. I hope it won't give a wrong impression about how that lovely creature is regarded in her own home. I really don't know how it happened. I am sure my feelings are keen enough; but yesterday morning was such a whirl, and just as the travellers were starting, Preston came to me with a teasing question about the arrangements for the evening. I was obliged to attend to him, or nothing would have been as it should be."

"Lady Forest is differently circumstanced, you see, mamma; she can afford to have feelings on public occasions, and let things take their course. She is not on promotion as we are."

"I should be very much grieved if I thought Constance was in any danger of being looked down upon by the people she is going among. I have been doing my very utmost, ever since I saw how things were likely to turn out, to give the Forests the right impression about all our connections. I have given your father all the hints I dare give, to prevent his making

unfortunate allusions, as he does sometimes, and I have gone against my own feelings and run the risk of offending old friends, for the sake of keeping all our entertainments lately, as nearly as possible, to their set. My own feelings would have led me to ask Emmie West to be one of the bridesmaids, but I refrained, from fear of giving theirs the smallest shock."

"I wonder what sort of feelings those are that would be shocked at the sight of Emmie West."

"Lady Forest is very inquisitive, and might have asked questions. As it was, I think she must have been struck with the fact that the person of most consequence in the room was a friend on our side, quite unconnected with them. I wonder whether your father talked at all to Lord Anstice. I rather thought he would have proposed his health, but he did not. Do you suppose Lord Anstice was satisfied with the amount of attention he received, Alma?"

"I did not ask him, mamma; but I don't suppose he came here to talk to papa, or to have his health drunk either."

"Alma, have you an idea that he came for any other reason than because he was asked? You will tell me, I am sure, if you have."

"He did not come for the reason that has just shot into your head, dear mother, I assure you, so put it away as quickly as you can. It was all a joke to him. His cousin, whom we do know intimately, and whom we did not ask, saw the invitation we sent to him whom we knew very little, and ordered him to accept it. My clairvoyance does not go further than that. I can't make up my mind how much good-nature there was in Wynyard Anstice's bestirring himself to secure us the presence of a live earl at our first wedding, or how far it was done in pure scorn. Lord Anstice did as he was bid, and is only disappointed that we are all so like the people that he sees every day, that coming to our wedding has given him nothing new to talk about. If we had been vulgar on the surface, so that he could see it, he would have been quite satisfied with his morning's entertainment."

"Really, Alma, I wonder how you can talk in that cold-blooded way. If Wynyard Anstice has been representing us to his cousin as proper subjects for ridicule, I can only say he makes a most unworthy return for all the kindness I showed him in old times, when your brothers used to bring him from school to spend holidays

with us. I can't believe such a thing of him, however."

"And you need not, mamma. I am quite as sure as you can be, that Mr. Anstice has never spoken disparagingly of us to any one, and I sincerely believe he meant to do you a pleasure by sending his cousin here yesterday. Perhaps he thought it would please me too; I don't know."

"Then you should not say such misleading things, my dear, making one uncomfortable for nothing."

"You are right, mamma, I should not."

The conversation seemed to have come to a standstill, as it was apt to do when Wynyard Anstice's name got into any talk between the mother and daughter.

Alma, who was much given to tracing effects to their causes, was just beginning to wonder how this name came to be spoken so often as was the case — seeing that her own determination, and, as she believed, her mother's was to keep it from ever being spoken at all: was it really so much in her secret thoughts, that it forced itself to her tongue without her will's leave — when the thread of her self-questioning was broken by the entrance of the servant with the evening letters. A foreign one, addressed to Alma, fixed her mother's eyes, as well as her own.

"From Constance," exclaimed Lady Rivers, leaning forward in her chair, the self-satisfaction passing from her face as a flash of true mother-hunger came for a moment into her eyes.

"Be quick and open it, Alma; there will be something for me inside. What! not a line — well, read — what does the sweet child say? Is she comfortable and happy?"

"There is not much; you had better read it, mamma; it is chiefly directions about sending on her boxes," said Alma, as she handed a sheet, with a few lines scribbled on it, to her mother.

"And there is nothing more? Alma, are you sure?" said Lady Rivers, after a moment's silence, during which her heart, deadened and choked with world-dust as it was, had been rent with a sore pang. "You are sure there is no slip of paper inside the envelope with a more private word to me or you? This tells us nothing."

"It is all there is; and, mamma, I am very sorry to see that you are so disappointed, but I think Constance is right; it would not do for her to begin writing private words to me, or even to you, now that she is Constance Forest. She cannot have anything really interesting to tell

us, so she had much better hold her tongue."

"My dear, I had a great deal to say to my mother the day after my wedding."

"You, mamma! Yes."

The tone in which this was said carried so much suggestion with it, that Lady Rivers sat upright in her chair, and folded her hands in her lap preparatory to answering it.

"My dear Alma, I wish you would get out of the habit of insinuating things. I don't think you can mean it, but really your manner of speaking of Constance's engagement ever since it took place, and now of her marriage, would lead any one who heard you to suppose that it was something forced upon her, instead of being her own deliberate choice, as you well know to have been the case."

"No, mamma, I don't mean to throw any blame of the kind on you; I beg your pardon if I have given that impression. I know that Constance chose her lot herself with her eyes open, and I really think she has taken what will suit her best; but, all the same, I doubt whether her thoughts about it just now will bear discussion with you or me, and I think she is wise to take the silent course, and work it into the best shape she can by herself."

"I can't see why she should not be radiantly happy, and thankful to me who have done so much for her, and by my exertions (for this is the case, Alma) enabled her to gain the position she is best suited for. Sir John Forest may not be as clever as your father or so agreeable as Wynyard Anstice —"

"There is no need to bring his name into the discussion, mamma."

"Certainly not, except that you and your brothers have made so much more of him than he deserves; but, as I was saying, it is an enviable position Constance has gained, and I do think it is rather hard on me, who have toiled night and day for all your advancement, that when any one of you succeeds you should grudge me the satisfaction of knowing you are content."

"Dear mother, it is hard, but I think the fruit of the tree we are all of us busy gathering has that kind of taste. Constance has got her apple of Sodom, and it is a very handsome one to look at; we had better not insist on knowing exactly what she finds inside it, I think."

"My dear Alma, at least I hope you will keep such reflections for home use."

"You may depend on that, mamma, and after to-day, on this subject at least, I

don't think you will hear any more of them. You must please forgive me if I have made you uncomfortable, but you know now that I have lost Constance: there is no one else to whom I can safely grumble on home subjects. However, I have done now, mamma. Let us turn to the other letters."

A heap of invitations and notes of congratulation were examined, discussed, and put aside to be answered later, and then Alma held up two thick letters to her mother's notice. "One is from Agatha from her convent, and the other from Aunt West; shall I read them aloud to you?"

Lady Rivers sank back in her chair with a look of real uneasiness and oppression now. "I don't think I can bear either to-night," she said; "they must keep for a few hours. Whatever Agatha has found to say about her sister's marriage, I know it will be something to give me pain; and the last time she wrote she signed herself 'Sister Mary of Consolation,' as if to show how completely she had cut herself off from her own family. You may not readily believe it of me, Alma, but I could hardly get the thought of Agatha out of my head, all yesterday, the bitter thought of her estrangement from me, and you would have me suppose that I have lost Constance, too, in another way."

"I am sorry I said so much, mamma, for I am sure Constance will give you all the satisfaction out of her married life she can; but how about Aunt West's letter?"

"Read it to yourself, and tell me by-and-by if there is anything that needs an answer. It can hardly be a pleasant letter. Of course your poor aunt must feel aggrieved, for I really have been obliged to neglect the Wests of late, and it is unfortunate that it should have happened so soon after the death of the little boy that your aunt took so much to heart. I am sure I felt for her at the time, but when, soon after, this affair of Constance's came on, I could not help my time and thoughts being greatly taken up. Lately I have not dared even to mention the name of West before your father, for fear he should take it into his head to insist that Emmie and Harry, and perhaps half-a-dozen more of them, should be asked to the wedding. Luckily your father never thinks of things unless they are actually brought before him. Of course I can't exactly explain to your poor aunt how it has been, or tell her I am determined to make up for my seeming neglect by doing all we can for them now."

"If they will let us."

"Ah, yes, Mr. West's temper is a great hindrance to the whole family; and your poor aunt has always given way far too much to him. I think, even with all their misfortunes, she might with spirit have kept up the credit of the family better. I don't think I should ever have allowed children of mine to live in a house, the best rooms of which were let out to lodgers,—that degradation, that last fatal step, I think, I should have had resolution to spare my family."

"Even with Mr. West for a husband. Mamma, what was Aunt Emmeline like when she was young—I don't mean as to looks—I can imagine that well enough; but, in short, how did she ever come to marry Mr. West?"

"My dear, things looked very differently then from what they do now. When we two sisters were engaged about the same time, it was I who was thought to be doing the imprudent thing, and, so to speak, rather throwing myself away. Emmeline's match was considered a very good one,—the junior partner in an old London mercantile house. I can remember how my mother used to explain it to our visitors, and the touch of mortification I felt at the few words that came to my share. 'Mr. Rivers is considered a clever man,' my mother would say apologetically, 'and though promotion is slow at the bar, poor Agatha has made up her mind to take her chance with him.' No one could have foreseen then how affairs would turn out, or the altered position we two sisters should stand in towards each other by the time our children were grown up."

"So poor Aunt Emmeline has not even the satisfaction I always credited her with, of having a disinterested love-match to look back upon."

"You do so jump to conclusions, Alma. I never said your aunt did not love Mr. West when she married him. Of course she did, and was flattered by his choice of her, as well as very thankful to give such a triumph to her father and mother, who had not had much prosperity in their early lives, I can tell you. She made them happy in their old age, and I often tell her the reflection should be a greater support to her in her misfortunes than I fear it is. At all events she has a right to look for a like return from her own daughter."

"Poor little Emmie, I hope you won't impress that obligation too strongly upon her, mamma; she has burdens enough already, and had better let the matrimonial one wait a while. It is all very strange."

Now I think of it, I can remember stories of Agatha's and Frank's childhood which always struck me as investing the Wests with quite a different relationship to ourselves from anything that Constance and I ever saw. I have felt dimly, but never realized, that they were the great people in those days, and that some strange jugglery must have taken place to alter the perspective so."

"No one can say, my dear, that prosperity has changed my feelings; it has only laid fresh duties upon me, and of course your poor aunt Emmeline's duties are changed too."

"As far as we are concerned the life in Saville Street has faded into a dim background, which brings out all the sharp points of our prosperity, with different effects on the minds of the beholders—very different effects."

"You need not remind me of that, Alma; it is never far from my thoughts, and you cannot wonder if I feel very little disposed to throw you younger ones much under Aunt Emmeline's influence. I never can forget that it was after spending a month in Saville Street that Agatha first began to talk to me about her distaste of the world, and attraction toward sacred poverty, and to put forth the extraordinary views that have landed her where she is now."

"Aunt West is not responsible, however, for the direction Agatha's enthusiasm has taken; she is quite as much puzzled at it as you are; and to set against Agatha's convent, in the scale of obligation between us and the Wests, you must put yesterday's wedding. You may not be aware of it, but it was after an afternoon spent in Saville Street that Constance made up her mind to throw over young Lawrence for all the dances she had promised him at old Lady Forest's ball, and forced herself to give Sir John the smile that settled his destiny forever afterwards. I saw it all, and shall always maintain that if the atmosphere in the Wests' little breakfast-room that day had been a whit more tolerable, and the boys' manners just a shade more civilized, young Lawrence would have won the day, and been the bridegroom at Constance's wedding, yesterday."

"Alma, what reckless talk! how can you allow yourself to indulge in it now?"

"Just this once more, mamma. As I said before, I have no one but you to grumble with, and after to-night I shall have so accustomed myself to the new state of affairs as not to care to talk about it. But I

have done already. I am going to read the letters."

The mere outside of these seemed to have effectually quelled Lady Rivers's activity, for she at last leaned back in her chair, and shaded her eyes with her hand, not to see Alma's face as she read the closely-written sheets slowly by the fire-light. The flicker rose and fell, bringing out all manner of beautiful lights and shades on her sheeny silk dress, on the coils of soft light hair that lay low on her neck, and on a face, turned towards the flames, that was never hard to read, and that some people thought worthy of a good deal of study. Some people—others were apt to raise the question whether Alma Rivers would have passed for a beauty if the loveliness of her two sisters had not somehow involved her in a halo of admiration and observation that blinded the public eyes to her actual claims. And then would follow a criticism of features which demolished all her pretensions to the regular beauty they inherited from their mother, by showing how much likeness to her father there was in her spirited face. It was almost ridiculous, people said, to catch under a wreath of flowers and braided hair, a resemblance to those strongly-marked, characteristic features which political caricatures and illustrated journals had familiarized everybody with, and had held up again and again to public admiration or contempt. It really did make the homage paid to Alma as a reigning beauty almost absurd. But the homage continued to be paid through a second season when Lady Rivers's energetic management had taken her daughters *everywhere*; and there was one at least of her admirers who had gone the length of so distinguishing Alma Rivers from her reputation as a beauty, as to be willing to allow that it was just those irregularities of form, and flashes of expression to which other people objected, that gave her face its conquering charm, and made it the one beautiful face in the world for him.

Alma let the letters fall into her lap when she had read them, and sat with her hands clasped round her knees looking into the fire for a long time. There was perfect stillness at last, and the room was full of the scents of hothouse flowers, and of a ruddy fire glow in which it was luxury to sit and dream, and there was, it must be confessed, a kind of luxury of sadness in the reverie to which Alma gave way. A sadness which was very far indeed from being pain, though as the thought rose, large round tears gathered in Alma's beau-

tiful eyes, and made marks on the sheeny dress as they fell. She fancied herself very unhappy, for she had no experience which taught her the great gulf that lies between imaginative sorrows which can estimate the pathos of their own pain, and those vital ones which strike at the very root of thought; and she believed herself just now to have come to a point in her life when a great many cherished illusions must be parted with, and a reality she was not prepared for embraced. Henceforth, she was saying to herself, there would be much of solitude in her life, and if any important decision had to be made she must make it alone; and, what was worse, without any clear principles or even definite wishes to shape her determination upon. She had, she told herself, grown out of many splendid hopes of her youth, and the failure consisted rather in that she was disenchanted with herself than with her old ideals. The objects she had longed for might even be near, ready for her to take; but she doubted very much her own strength to choose them now, or rather to be satisfied when chosen. Was it strength or weakness, reasonableness or folly, she asked herself with a touch of self-contempt, which made her see the desirableness of opposite goods so strongly that she could not heartily wish for anything? or was she really at twenty so dusty and dried up with the worldliness she had imbibed from her childhood as to have no power of *feeling* vividly, only this horrible power of *thinking*, of weighing everything in the balance and finding it wanting? Why had Agatha deserted her? Agatha, through whose imagination she had been used to look at the world, who had invested the amusements and pursuits they had shared together with something from herself that made them worth living for. Why had Agatha, suddenly at the end of one month of absence, come back translated as it were into a new world, the entrance gate to which was forever shut to Alma? Why had she deliberately stripped off the halo she had herself given from all their aims and pleasures, pronouncing them hollow and unsatisfying, and then stepped out into a sphere whose pure, cold, dazzling air Alma felt she could not breathe. Her hand strayed once during these thoughts to Agatha's letter lying on her lap, but she did not take it up. It was no use. It was too far off from her to be any help. The inward spiritual experiences it treated of were, for her, too unreal to have any comfort in them. Tears of real pain, but of

the pathetic, bearable sort still, came to her eyes as she murmured to herself,—

For this on death my wrath I wreak;
He put our lives so far apart we cannot hear
each other speak.

Was the misfortune less when something else than death did this? when the body was left and the audible voice, and it was the soul that had gone too far off for thought to pass between it and those it had left? What silence was there so terrible as the silence that comes between souls that can no longer make each other understand however loud they speak, or however closely and lovingly they whisper in the ear? Forever, Alma said to herself, must this silence reign between herself and her best-loved sister; and now Constance, her nursery companion, who had clung to her trembling a few hours ago, had been borne off—rather by the course of events, it seemed, than her own free will—into this unknown world of matrimony, to which certainly love had not given her a golden key. How would she fare in it? Was hers the substantial, real world, and Agatha's only shadow; or was it just the other way? Was there a real world possible for those who, having tasted of the Sodom apples, had lost the power of distinguishing substance from shadow? Alma smiled with a little scorn of her self-scorn, as she asked the question, and then proceeded to justify it by a rapid survey of the lives she knew best—even Aunt West's, robbed of the spice of romance she had credited it with, beginning under false expectations, and ending in gloom; her mother's, which to outsiders looked such a brilliant example of rewarded love, but from which, as she knew, love had long since been crowded out by hosts of uneasy cares and paltry ambitions. After all, since this same dust of care choked all roads alike, did it matter much by which gate one entered on one's destiny, love or worldly prudence? Had not Constance after all done well in ignoring the gate, and choosing what appeared the least uphill road, strewn with fewest stones to hurt her feet?

Alma thought she was really pondering this problem in the abstract, and trying to give it a dispassionate answer; and, all the time, it was not Constance's decision she was looking at. Her thoughts, like birds on the wing, were hovering, but never settling round an application of the question that concerned herself. There it was in the distance, a very up-hill road,

but the gate looked golden enough. She was not nearly ready for a decision yet. She might never be ready, she told herself, but meanwhile there was at least interest in glancing furtively that way sometimes. If she could but see how the road would look a little further on! If the hand that offered the key would remove some stones out of the way she was required to walk in; if he would even leave off putting down fresh stones; or if — if — looking down into her soul she could find strength to choose the stony path, and find the same strange satisfaction in it that he seemed to find! Well — well — Constance's marriage, and yesterday's display, and the invitation sent to Lord Anstice, that was due to his cousin, were threads of circumstance certainly not drawing her *that* way. She saw how they were being woven about her, and wondered whether she, like Constance, would wake up some day to find herself bound to a course she only half approved by a million slender invisible threads, that could only be broken by the strength of a Hercules.

Alma had ample time for all these speculations, for this was one of the evenings when her father was not likely to return home till very late; and under pretext of fatigue she and her mother had decided on keeping on their afternoon dresses, and indulging in a second tea in the inner drawing-room, instead of dinner.

Lady Rivers dearly loved this indulgence, but sternly refused it to herself, except on rare occasions, for fear her servants should guess that its enjoyment consisted in its being a renewal of old habits. When, an hour later, she and Alma were sitting together, with a comfortable meal spread on a small table by the fire, and a knock came at the front door, her face showed an extremity of dismay at which Alma could not help smiling.

"Will Preston be so absurd as to let any one in?" she cried. "What o'clock is it, Alma? Only a quarter past eight! We could not be supposed to be taking tea after dinner, and with *pâtés* and jelly on the table, at this hour."

"Only a very charitable person would give us the benefit of such a supposition, I am afraid, mamma. But don't be alarmed. I assure you I have seen Lady Forest sit down to tea on Sunday evening with a plate of radishes before her; and if our visitor at this untimely hour proves to be one of her set, I will take an opportunity of mentioning the circumstance."

"Pray don't be so absurd. Stay! It was not your father's knock; but surely that is his footstep on the stairs. What a comfort that it is only your father!"

But Lady Rivers rejoiced too soon. It was indeed the face of Lord Justice Rivers that appeared when the door opened; but other steps followed his to the inner room; and before she had finished her exclamations of surprise at her husband's unexpected return, Wynyard Anstice had shaken hands with Alma, and was making his way towards her, with a look on his face half deprecatory, half mischievously triumphant, such as he used to confront her with in long-past days, when he had been deputed by the schoolroom party to confess some desperate piece of mischief, in which all the juniors had been involved with him.

"I am perfectly aware I am doing what you don't like in coming here this evening," the look said; "but I don't mean you to be angry with me. I am throwing myself on the good-natured side of your character, in whose existence I always mean to believe, however much your actions towards me belie it."

She had never been able to resist feeling a sort of motherliness towards him, which his boyish confidence in her had called out in old times; and even now, vexed as she was, his winning face and manner conquered her again; and she shook hands and answered his inquiries after the newly-made Lady Forest with less coldness than had lately marked her attitude towards this least desirable of all Alma's lovers. She did not even attempt to telegraph her vexation on to her husband; there was no use in directing displeased glances towards Sir Francis Rivers, for he never saw them. If he had ever listened to her hints about the undesirableness of encouraging Wynyard Anstice's intimacy with the family, he had utterly forgotten by this time that such words had ever been spoken; and now he sat down with a provoking smile of complacency on his face, satisfied that he had done a sensible thing in bringing home an old family friend, on a vacant evening, and thus securing pleasant occupation for the ladies of the house, while he was set free to enjoy the rare luxury of lounging in his easy-chair with an uncut quarterly which he had already taken from a side-table in passing, and was nursing lovingly on his knee.

"Ah," he said, glancing towards the table by the fire, and then at his wife, "I need not have dined at the club if I had known I should be released so early; we

would have had high tea together, my dear, in memory of old days, and I might almost have fancied ourselves back in our chambers at Gate Street, when the children were babies, and dinners were luxuries reserved for high days."

Lady Rivers kept her face steadily turned towards the cup she was filling during this speech, and only Alma saw the beautiful look that shone from Wynyard Anstice's eyes towards her father. It stirred her with a vivid feeling that had pleasure, and a little pain in it too. She liked to see her father appreciated, above most things, but she was not sure that she wanted Wynyard Anstice to admire him exactly for the reason in his thoughts now. Encouragement in being unconventional and unworldly was precisely what Wynyard Anstice did not, in Alma's estimation, require. She might like these qualities in him ever so dearly far down in her inmost heart, but she saw, at the same time, that they would not aid him in paving the smooth path she sometimes dreamed they might walk in together. The next moments brought her unmixed pleasure, for, while her father sipped his tea, keeping his finger all the while on the page in the quarterly he was longing to plunge into, he carried on a desultory conversation with his guest, from which it by-and-by appeared that an essay of Mr. Anstice's that had lately come out in a quarterly journal had attracted her father's attention, and won his unqualified approbation as being a masterly piece of reasoning, for once unspoiled by reference to any of his own particular crotchets. Alma even thought she observed a new air of respect in her father's manner, very different from the amused indulgence with which he had hitherto been in the habit of listening to young Anstice's arguments, when by-and-by a lively discussion grew out of this qualified praise. As she listened, turning her head from one speaker to the other, and now and then venturing to put in a playful word, a change seemed to come over her whole person; the cynical, weary look left her face; her brow cleared of its weight of discontent; her eyes took a new intensity of color in their blue depths; the drooping mouth became full of spirit and tenderness. It was the look that was her father's, but with something higher added — a touch of enthusiasm that his face had lost. It was her highest self uppermost for the moment that looked out and showed to some eyes that noted it well what a stake it was for which the world and love were playing.

Meanwhile Lady Rivers was asking herself, "Could anything be more unfortunate?" Here was all her laborious twelve months' work in the way of being undone, by her husband, too! who professed — and to do him justice, honestly intended — to leave the management of family politics in her hands! How it was that, with the reputation for wisdom the world gave him, he should show himself so thoroughly incompetent whenever he presumed to meddle in home affairs, was a standing puzzle to her, and constantly made her feel thankful that public business required so much less delicate handling than private that her husband's blundering could there pass for discretion. If the government and the bar had had the same opinion of the justice's ability that long experience had brought to his wife, where would the prosperity of the family have been? It was indeed well that the coarser texture of men's business was suited to their coarser wits. This reflection soothed the extremity of Lady Rivers's irritation, and enabled her to see that her own consummate prudence would be best shown to-night by standing aside, and letting the unfavorable current that had set in run its course. So when the happy moment came for the justice, when, without rudeness, he could turn to his book, she established herself in a shady corner of the sofa, which always meant sleep, and saw Alma go to the piano, far away in the arctic regions of the great drawing-room, without a word of objection. Open love-making she knew she had not to fear, and other words, however deep an impression they might make on two hearts, might easily hereafter be explained away. It was, after all, only a desultory conversation that set in, in intervals between Alma's playing; a few sentences merged into the music, and then taken up again. Alma was not in the mood to begin upon one of the half-bantering, half-serious arguments which for the last year or two, since she was quite grown up, had been the style of discourse she had usually fallen into with her old playmate, and she was afraid of getting any nearer to what Mr. Carlyle would call "sincere speech." It was not till after quite half an hour's music that she ventured on a remark bearing in any way on what she was thinking about. She had just brought Schumann's "*Schlummerlied*" to an end, and with her fingers resting on the keys, ready to dash into a waltz, if necessary, she said, —

"I am glad you had the sense not to congratulate me when you came in to-day."

"I am a great deal too unhappy myself at another defection from our schoolroom party of long ago to think of such a thing. There will be no one of us left soon."

"Except myself. 'A scolding woman in a wide house.'"

"A queen who has driven all her subjects away, satisfied with the wide house," Anstice corrected, venturing a steady look into Alma's face, that was turned up to him with a half-mocking, half-defiant expression on it.

"You think I have hectored my sisters out of the house, and the poor boys too. What an opinion you must have of my temper, to be sure!"

"You know that was not what I was thinking."

"Well, but don't you want to know how we all looked and behaved yesterday?"

"Unexceptionally, I am sure; and, as for looks, I suppose none of you can have looked at the bride without thinking how strongly her likeness to your other sister came out under her white veil."

"How do you know? Your cousin could not have told you that."

"My own eyes did. You don't believe I should lose such an opportunity for a critical look at you all, do you? I was up in the gallery all the time watching and comparing."

"Comparing?"

"Yes, I may as well tell you at once what I called this evening principally to find an opportunity of saying to you. A fortnight ago I was in Paris staying with a friend whose wife has lately become an ardent Roman Catholic. She was full of a grand ceremony that was to take place at a convent near. I went with her, and through a phalanx of gratings, had a glimpse of your sister Agatha, in what I suppose was her last public appearance. I could not make out the ceremony. It seemed to me a sort of travesty of a wedding followed by a funeral, 'crowned and buried.' And your sister looked so like herself all the while that I had to rub my eyes every now and then to be convinced I was not dreaming one of our old charade-actings over again."

"Do you think she saw you?"

"Oh, no, I was cooped up in a crowd behind close gratings. I don't suppose I had any right to be there; but my friend's wife had my edification strongly at heart, and stretched a point. I am afraid she is founding very false hopes on the interest she saw that the ceremony excited in me."

"Tell me again how Agatha looked —

was it really as Constance looked yesterday?"

"I never thought them as much alike as other people did, you know, but yesterday when I had a moment's good view of your sister Constance, as she turned to you just before kneeling down, I could almost have thought myself in that convent chapel again, and that the face was Agatha's, — almost for an instant; the second impression, of course, was of the difference."

"Tell me about that."

"It is difficult to put into words."

"You must try, or you should not have begun to speak about it."

"Well, if I must, let me see. I think I can only say it was a difference in degree, something added to the convent bride's look. The fear on Constance's face was awe on Agatha's, and the clinging dependence which made yesterday's bride cast so many reluctant looks back on you, gave Agatha's eyes an inward expression, as if she were gathering strength by thought from some felt but unseen presence. I don't know which was the most beautiful after all; but Agatha's face was the thing to remember."

"And we were none of us there! I wonder if we should any of us have so much as seen all *that* if we had been there."

So far apart we cannot hear each other speak.

The words rushed into Alma's mind again, and with them came quick tears, that having once been indulged refused to be sent back to their source unshed. She turned her head as far from the light as possible, but could not conceal that in an instant her face was wet.

Lady Rivers would have been ready to faint with dismay, if she had roused herself at that moment from pleasant dreams to such a sight — Alma weeping silently, and Wynyard Anstice looking on with an intensity of sympathy and emotion on his always expressive face, that might well make her thankful for the blinding effect of tears on Alma. The danger to her was only momentary however. Mr. Anstice got up hastily and walked to a distant table, where, with his back to Alma, he stood nervously fingering the ornaments, and clasping and unclasping photograph-books. It had been a great shock to him, and he had as much need of a struggle to get back into his ordinary drawing-room self as had Alma. He had never seen tears in her eyes in his life before, never. Not even in childhood, when at partings, or meetings, or pathetic readings,

which had moved her sisters to tears, she had always remained bright and defiant.

The times when in confidential talk her eyes had softened in his sight were epochs to be chronicled for the effect they had had far down in his inmost soul. He heard a large tear fall on one of the music-sheets she was gathering up in her hands, as his thoughts reached this point, and it sent a thrill through him. A thrill that was not all sympathy with her pain, there was a pang for himself as well as for her. When he had entered the room to-night he believed that a contest which had long disturbed his life was decided forever, a victory won, and that he had only come to look once more on a lost love. What was there in this sudden rain of tears for Agatha to water the dead hopes, the buried unrest (which he had so congratulated himself on having securely buried), and cause them to spring up into life again stronger and greener than ever? Nothing absolutely. It was most unreasonable to feel that by revealing so much of her soul to him Alma had laid a new claim on his devotion; but he did somehow so feel, and he could not all in a moment decide whether it was in pain or triumph that he took up the old burden again, resolving to carry it at all events a little further on the road. He only knew that each tear as it fell had struck on his heart and left a trace there that would not be easily worn out; whether it was destined to fester into one of those sore spots that make memory a torment or deepen and widen into a fountain of lifelong joy. Alma was innocent of the smallest design or wish to excite so much emotion. She was deeply ashamed of her tears long before the power to restrain them came, and by the time she had strangled the last sob and brought her eyes into something like order the feeling that had called them forth had evaporated into an absorbing anxiety to look as usual when the now fast-approaching inevitable moment came, when Lady Rivers should awake from her nap and come into the room, to end this perilous interview with such words of polite dismissal as she so well knew how to administer to an unwelcome guest. Alma's first sentence when she came up to the table and addressed Mr. Anstice was spoken in a light, indifferent tone that jarred strangely on his mood.

"You won't find any record of yesterday there," she began. "We were not guilty of having ourselves photographed in our wedding dresses. You had better question me unless you have heard all the

gossip from your cousin already. I know you are quite capable of cross-examining him on the minutest details, for you always were the newsmonger of our society."

He was silent, not being able at once to get back into a lightness of tone that would match hers; and Alma rattled on, throwing an accent of warning into her next sentence.

"Mamma, would you believe it? Mr. Anstice will not allow that he took enough interest in us to ask his cousin how our wedding went off yesterday. Is such total lack of curiosity credible in him?"

Lady Rivers, who had entered the outer room just as Alma left the piano, now came forward into the circle of lamplight with an expression of some anxiety on her face. Had maternal vigilance slept too long, and given time for the occurrence of a frightful calamity? A glimpse at Alma's tear-stained face made her heart absolutely stand still, but turning to Wynyard she saw a look of pain on his that sent up her spirits many degrees at once. Was it even better than she had dared to hope? Had he spoken again, poor fellow? and had Alma, like a sensible, good girl, given him his final dismissal? That would indeed be fortunate, and leave the way clear and open for delicate schemes which her genius, now that Alma was the only one left to scheme for, was longing to elaborate. This pleasing supposition lent quite a motherly tone of interest to her voice and smile, as she turned to the young man, who had once long ago, in the character of her favorite son's safest comrade, shared her matronly solicitude to a certain small extent.

"We know Mr. Anstice's friendly feeling towards the family too well," she said, "not to be sure that nothing but a really pressing engagement would have prevented his being with us, or, at all events, full of thought for us on such an important day."

"I had no engagement. I did not come to you yesterday because I was not asked," he said, looking full at her. Lady Rivers did not expect such a bold thrust even from Wynyard Anstice's unconventional sincerity, but she was equal to the occasion.

"We hardly thought a formal invitation necessary with you, as our note to your cousin warned you of the day; but, however, you did not lose anything by not coming. We were all too sad to be pleasant company, and even Sir Francis broke down in his speech. Your cousin will have told you."

"I have not seen him since yesterday morning."

"He was very undutiful then," cried Alma, whose cheek had burned under her mother's implied falsehood, and who was longing to put an end to the conversation. "He told me he meant to report himself to you on the first moment of his release, and seemed perfectly aware that his *raison d'être* was to see everything with your eyes and carry it to you."

Mr. Anstice smiled. "I know you have a theory of your own about my cousin's character; but now you know him better, don't you see more in him than the sort of devoted SMIKE you chose to fancy him in old days?"

"SMIKE! Oh no. I never thought of anything so racy. My types for you and your cousin were taken from a tale of Madame de Genlis's we used to read in the schoolroom — 'Alphonse and Thelismar' — the *dérégulé* young French noble and his philosophical friend, who brought him back to reason by discourses on nature and the general course of things."

"I hope yesterday made you ashamed of the inexactness of your portrait-painting, then."

"Well, I will confess I was a little disappointed. Lord Anstice did not talk so much like Alphonse as I had expected, nor display so much devotion to Thelismar as (lowering her tone) I perhaps think past and present circumstances warrant."

"I have always told you you misunderstand those same circumstances."

Lady Rivers did not hear the lowered tones, but she had caught the word disappointed and could not resist putting in a word on a subject which was always more or less in her thoughts whenever she saw Alma and Wynyard Anstice together.

"You must not be surprised if we all feel a little disappointed on first acquaintance with your cousin. We naturally expect a great deal from a person in whose favor, as it seems to us, you voluntarily cut yourself off from all your prospects in life and from your older friends."

It was meant for a stinging reproach to Wynyard, but all the pain it gave came to Alma. To him it was almost incomprehensible, so distorted was the view of the facts to which it alluded. Some years ago, when the Riverses first knew him, he and his younger cousin had been equally dependent for education and advancement in life on the head of their family, a bachelor uncle, with an old title and large unentailed estates. The younger and the least-promising lad represented the elder

branch and was heir to the title, but Wynyard had always been his uncle's favorite, and was looked upon as likely to inherit the larger portion of his wealth, till a few months before the old man's death, when he managed to quarrel with him on some abstract question of principle and conduct, and so offended him by maintaining his own contrary views, on a public occasion, that he was never received into favor again. When a little later the uncle died, and the will came to be read, it was found that the despotic old man had heaped the whole of his great wealth on the nephew who, though less satisfactory in conduct, had allowed his theories to be prescribed for him, and left the one best liked to fight out a position in the world he had elected to live in after fashions of his own.

This change in Mr. Anstice's circumstances had occurred about two years ago, just at the time when his attachment to Alma began to be talked about; and Lady Rivers never could forgive the part he had acted in ruining himself. If a totally unattached young man of her acquaintance chose to be quixotic, and recklessly throw away the good gifts fortune had designed for him, a quiet pity for his folly, and a resolute avoidance of him in future, was all the notice that it was necessary for her to take of his misconduct. But when the young man had already taken the liking of a girl of good position into his keeping, and when that girl was her own most attractive daughter, the indignation that swelled her motherly heart was too bitter to be quietly borne. It was always waking up and rousing her into expressions of hostility that her better judgment deprecated — the more so as Alma could never be made to express satisfactory condemnation of her lover's conduct. Yet the invectives were not altogether lost. Alma did not acquiesce when her mother told her again and again that Wynyard Anstice's real care to win her was to be estimated by the lightness with which he had thrown away the conditions that made such winning possible; but the words rankled and made a sore wound in her mind that winced whenever it was touched. The pain she felt just now stung her into something like defiance, and determined her to persevere in the low-toned talk it was meant to interrupt.

"I am really sorry you did not see your cousin yesterday afternoon," she said; "I had given him a message for you, and he promised me to look you up, in whichever of your haunts you might be."

"The haunt which actually held me was

one where I don't think his courage would have been sufficient to induce him to follow me. At the time when your party broke up, I was speaking in a lecture-room in an out-of-the-way place in the east end, at a meeting convened to discuss woman's suffrage, among other social questions."

Alma's face clouded again; every fresh instance of Mr. Anstice's disposition to take up unpopular subjects, struck her as a sort of slight to herself.

"How can you go to such places? making people talk of you, and hindering your getting on in your profession, and lowering papa's opinion of your good sense. Why can't you give up such freaks now?" she asked, putting a greater amount of pleading in her voice than she was quite aware of.

"I did not intend to take part in the discussion when I went in; I was moved to it by what I thought unfair hostility shown towards a lady, who got up in the body of the meeting and pleaded woman's rights, not so much to votes as to wider spheres of work, in a speech that was a good deal above the heads of most of the people there. I will confess, however, that I was struck with her remarks before the row began, and with herself too, for she was no common-looking person, I can tell you, in spite of the company she had got herself among. Perhaps some people — I don't say myself, but some people — might even have thought it worth while to miss a wedding breakfast for the sake of hearing and seeing her."

"Then I suppose she is young and handsome, in spite of *Punch's* last week's picture. But she must be a monster to go to a meeting of rough people, and get up and speak. I can't think how you can defend such conduct."

"I don't defend it; I only say that being present I was struck with what she said, and how she looked while saying it."

"So handsome?"

"No, not at all handsome, but a very unforgettable face all the same."

"Did you make out her name?"

"I heard it spoken by some people near, Miss Moore — Katharine Moore, I believe they called her; and as you seem curious about her looks, here is an outline sketch I took of her before I grew too much interested in what she was saying to do anything but listen."

"Katharine Moore —"

Alma repeated the name musingly, as she examined a pocket-book page, on which was sketched hastily, but effectively,

a strongly-featured, expressive face, with dark, level brows, wide forehead, full, well-shaped mouth, and indented chin.

"Katharine Moore — how strange — I believe she must be the elder of the two sisters to whom Aunt West —"

Alma stopped short, arrested by an agonized look from her mother; and Lady Rivers finished her sentence. "One of the orphans whom my sister, Mrs. West, has received into her house as companions to her daughter."

"Poor little Emmie West," said Alma quickly, to stop further explanation, "how will she like companions who get themselves into rows at public meetings, I wonder? I must go and look her up, I think, now that all our gaieties are over."

"Miss West!" cried Anstice. "Ah, she was not at the wedding any more than myself then? Why should not I look her up, that we may condole with each other, and then perhaps" (with a malicious smile towards Alma) "I shall see my lady orator again."

Mr. Anstice took his departure soon after this, and Alma got a lecture from her mother for making her eyes red, for showing too much interest in Wynyard Anstice's doings, and for bringing in her aunt's name in conversation, with people who did not belong to the family. How strange it was that she who was reputed so clever should make more mistakes than Constance ever did, and never allow her mother the repose of feeling she might be trusted.

It certainly had not been a pleasant evening; and yet Alma, as she sat staring into her bedroom fire before going to bed, felt not happier, perhaps, but fuller of life than she had felt for many long days. The hurry of engagements and gaieties in which she lived had lately been growing so meaningless and vapid to her, it was a comfort to be raised out of its dust, even by sensations of pain — pain of such sort at least as this evening's reflections, and the sight of Wynyard Anstice had brought with it. It was not a new pain, nor even a new light upon it, only the old puzzle that she had pondered again and again. Could he really love her, so very much as his eyes sometimes said, when his own hand had put away the right to ask for her, and when even now he was putting all manner of crotchets before the purpose of climbing quickly up again to such a height as would enable her to look upon him with favor once more? If Alma had been asked if she could appreciate the sentiment of the poet-soldier, who sang, —

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more,

she would have answered, "Yes, certainly;" but then surely *that* meant honor such as the world could recognize — honor that could be reflected back in a halo round the beloved head; not subtle scruples like these, self-sacrifices that nobody asked — delicate weighings of more or less worth in work for the world, such as the world would never understand, and that were due to some overstrained, unrecognized sense of duty to powers out of sight.

Surely such mere floating thought-motes as these ought to be blown away by the strong gusts of passion? What was the worth of a love that barriers unseen by most eyes could hold back? Sadly, after long musing, Alma gave the old answer to this question, and then she knelt down and went through her prescribed round of evening devotions, not recognizing that the decision she had just come to was a distinct denial of there being any unseen presences to pray to.

A DOUBTING HEART.

BY MISS KEARY,

AUTHOR OF "CASTLE DALY," "OLDBURY," ETC.

CHAPTER II.

THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION.

THE clinging damp of a rainy November evening, while it stayed outside well-fenced houses, like Lady Rivers's, crept uncomfortably through and through the ground-floor rooms of a large, scantily-furnished, ill-warmed, and ill-lighted house at the opposite end of London. It brought out a slimy perspiration on the passage walls and hung misty halos round the dim gas-burners, so that they seemed to have withdrawn themselves miles away, and to be acting as signals in a fathomless distance. Perhaps it was the uncomfortable impression of desolate space thus created, which made the two occupants of one of the largest of these ground-floor rooms, sit close together on an old-fashioned couch ranged against the wall, apparently a mile or two from the fireplace, where a black fire, built up to give out heat sometime, but not now, smouldered dully. Quite out of the way of heat and light these two persons had been sitting for at least an hour,

and if they were not chilled to the bone, it must have been owing to a certain soft glow of love-light which shone from their eyes whenever in the course of a confidential low-toned talk they had looked at each other. Two pairs of velvety-brown eyes these were which thus interchanged love-light; too exactly alike in shape and color, and sweep of silken lashes to belong to lovers in the ordinary sense of that word, and having just the contrast of expression, lovingly trustful and lovingly anxious, which might be expected from the actual relationship of their owners. Mother and daughter, the one a thin, worn, sad-looking woman, the other a vigorous, bright girl, whose face, full of delicate coloring and light, spoke of an eager temperament and naturally gay spirits toned just now to seriousness by the quick sympathy that reflected every mood of those she loved.

Something very important had to be decided, something which so far as the conversation had gone at present, threatened equal pain to her mother, whichever way it was settled; and as Emmie West leaned her soft pink cheek against her mother's worn forehead, her velvety eyes (now that all the arguments she could think of had come to an end), had a sorrowful, dumb entreaty in them, which her mother felt without being able to satisfy.

"Do make up your mind to choose the least painful course, and *do* be as little unhappy as possible about it," the yearning eyes, hungry for a little joy, said, and sad-hearted Mrs. West stooped down and kissed them, not having any more satisfactory answer to give to this appeal — an appeal which she was apt to read in her children's eyes many times every day. It was not so much that she had lost the art of making the best of things, but that another influence stronger than even her children's, perpetually forced her to look on the gloomy side.

Life had been hard on Mr. West, on the husband who had in her youth honored her by thrusting unexpected elevation upon her, and now that the world had turned against him, she felt it would be disloyal in her to see anything but gloom in a state of things in which he had fared so ill. Who had he to feel with him but herself? — not even his children, poor, thoughtless, light-hearted things; and how could his sorrows be adequately mourned, unless her heart were always bleeding? If now and then, on rare occasions, when Mr. West was away, and not likely to return for a longer interval than usual, she was drawn on by her eldest son's gay

good-temper, and her daughter's sweet coaxing, to listen to the young people's schemes for the future (in which, to be sure, there was never any mention made of Mr. West), and she let her thoughts take a slight tinge of rose color from their inexperienced hopefulness, her conscience always smote her afterwards, and she reproached herself, as if her momentary escape from gloom had been an act of unfaithfulness to her husband. Just now, however, there was no question of escape. Mr. West might be expected home any minute (the fire was ready to be broken up into a blaze when his foot was heard on the scraper), and she and Emmie were tremblingly discussing the safest way of accomplishing a sacrifice she was contemplating on his behalf which must be so carried out, that, while he profited by it, he should never have the least idea that it had been made for him.

"My dear, I don't think I can make up my mind to-night," Mrs. West was saying. "We had better lock up the box again, and put it back on my dressing-table before your father comes in. I would not have him go up-stairs and miss it, and find out what we have been talking about for the world."

"Mamma, I wonder —" Emmie began hesitatingly, paused, and then hurried on as if half afraid of what she was saying. "Mamma, I wonder whether it might not be better after all to do it openly. Why should you have the pain of parting with your treasures, and the fright as well, which half kills you, of pretending to have got them all the same? Why should not papa know? Perhaps he would leave off expecting so much if he quite understood what a hard struggle it is for you to provide the little luxuries you say are so necessary for him. Let me go on, dear, and say what I have on my mind just this once. I *don't* think it is a fair division for you to have all the giving up, and all the pain of concealment as well. Katharine Moore says that women ought not to do such things; that they should act openly and independently, and then they would not be trampled upon."

"Trampled upon?" A look of almost wild horror flitted across Mrs. West's face. "Oh, Emmie, my dear, how could she have such a thought about me? You must not get it into your head, darling, or it will make me feel very wicked, as if I had terribly misrepresented things as they stand between your father and me. Trampled upon! Don't you understand, darling, that there is nothing I don't *want* to do

for him and all of you? If letting oneself be trampled upon would do any good, and keep humiliation from him and you, there would be no pain in it. It would not degrade me. The pain is that I am such a useless person, and can do so little to serve him and you all."

"It seems to me that you do everything, and bear all the pain."

"That is because I talk about it like a woman, and your father is silent to everybody but me; but, oh Emmie, he suffers for us all! I read the bitter pain that cuts down to the very bottom of his soul whenever he is made aware of any fresh privation we have to bear. It hurts him and humbles him down to the ground, though he can only show what he feels by short, sharp words. I understand, if you younger ones don't; and, darling, we will struggle to spare him little mortifications as long as we can; when there is nothing more to be done we will sit still and bear the will of God. Perhaps when we have done all we can, the worst, if it comes, will bring a sort of peace."

"Or good fortune will come at last; and mamma, you must not say that we young ones don't feel for papa. Harry does at all events. I really think he is almost as anxious to keep disagreeable things from papa's sight, and to provide against his being crossed in his fidgets, as you are. Do you know that ever since old Mary Anne refused to clean knives and shoes for lodgers, Harry has got up an hour earlier and gone down-stairs, and done all that part of the work before any one else is up? This puts Mary Anne into such good humor, that she takes pains with the breakfast again, and sends up the one rasher, and the two bits of toast, and the thick bread-and-butter, with as much ceremony as if it were a lord mayor's feast. You have not been down-stairs to see lately, but I assure you papa has looked almost satisfied, and yesterday he actually remarked that his boots were well blacked, and supposed we had got a new boy, and Sidney was so tickled at the idea, Harry had to kick him under the table to keep him from exploding. It's all Harry's doing, and I do believe he does it quite as much for papa's sake, as for yours."

"My own boy!" said Mrs. West fervently; and as she spoke her worn face glowed, and a smile broke over it, obliterating for a moment its lines of care and pain, and making it almost as fair and young as Emmie's.

"But you won't love him better than me," said Emmie, pretending to pout;

"that would not be a good return for my giving myself up to you body and soul, and seeing only you in the world, would it, mother darling? I agree with Katharine Moore that women can understand and love each other best, and should stick to each other through thick and thin. Let the men fight for themselves, and help themselves, I say. I will take care of you, mother."

"Well then, dearest, I ought not to think of myself as poorer than your poor Aunt Rivers, who seems to be in the way of losing all her daughters, while I am to keep mine."

"And, mamma," cried Emmie eagerly, "that is another reason for your making up your mind to-day about the necklace. I forgot to mention it before, but it is a reason."

"Your never meaning to leave me, darling?"

"No, but my not having been invited to Constance's wedding. I will confess something to you, mother. I have often thought I should like to wear that necklace just once. I remember how I used to admire it when I was a little child, and you put it on to go out with papa to some grand party, and he used to come out of his dressing-room, when you were ready, and look — you know how, mamma, as he never looks now — proud of you, and of everything about him. I used to think then that wearing a pearl necklace meant being grown up, and beautiful, and perfectly happy. When I heard that Constance Rivers was engaged to be married, it did come into my mind that I might be asked to be one of her bridesmaids, and that perhaps Aunt Rivers would give me a dress such as would not disgrace the necklace, and that, for once, I could have looked so that the Riverses need not be ashamed of me. But the opportunity has passed, you see. I was not invited to the wedding, and I don't now believe I ever shall be asked to the Rivers's on any grand occasion; they look down upon us too much now. The necklace had better go, and not tantalize us any longer by lying idle in the jewel-box. I should not wonder, if after paying all these bills, and buying what you want for papa, and putting aside a little fund for emergencies, we might get a new floorcloth for the front hall out of the money the sale will bring. It would be a real load off my mind if we could do that, for I am quite certain the old one can't be put down again after another spring cleaning. Imagine our feelings if Aunt Rivers or the new

Lady Forest were to call here some day and have to put their feet absolutely on bare boards! I don't think we should ever get Aunt Rivers into the sitting-room, she would faint in the hall; and I am sure no one in this house could carry her back into her carriage. We should never hear the last of it."

"My darling, it was of your own wedding day, not of Constance Rivers's, that I have thought, when I have many a time put back the necklace into its case, through sore needs of selling it we have struggled out of. Your father gave it me on the day you were christened, and I have a feeling that it is robbing you to send it away. I should have liked him to clasp it round your neck before he gave you away to any one."

"Mamma," said Emmie, after a moment's pause, with a richer flush than usual on her cheek, but a resolute tone of reasonableness in her voice, "Katharine Moore says it is quite time that girls left off looking upon marriage as the one object of their existence. She says it is an accident of life that occurs now to fewer and fewer women every year, and that girls should plan their lives without any reference to it whatever."

"I am afraid very few of them will do so, my dear, in spite of Katharine Moore."

"But at all events I can, mamma," said Emmie, sitting a little more upright, and pushing her soft brown hair from her forehead, with a decided little gesture that had perhaps been caught from Katharine Moore. "I can make up my mind to look at things as they really are, and face them resolutely without deluding myself with vain expectations. Now let us consider, dear. I hardly ever go anywhere except now and then to drink tea in the 'Land of Beulah,' and that counts for nothing, as Mrs. Urquhart only asks me when she is alone. And if by a rare chance I do get an invitation to an evening party, and accept it, I am always sorry afterwards, for I don't feel at home among the other girls when I am there. It can't be helped, mother dear. I have not sat or stood in corners at Aunt Rivers's Christmas parties without finding out exactly how everybody looks at one when one has on the shabbiest dress in the room. Last Christmas a gentleman found me out in my corner, and sat talking to me a long time, and I thought perhaps he found me rather nice till Alma came and explained to me that Mr. Anstice was something of an oddity himself, and always made a point of talking to the person in the company most likely to be

overlooked by everybody else. It was ever so nice of him, but it was not the kind of compliment that encourages one to go out again, was it, mamma?"

"My darling, you know I would spare you Aunt Rivers's parties if I could, since I can't dress you for them as I should like; but—but—if Aunt Rivers took offence at my keeping you away, and your father were to begin to suspect her of slighting us——"

"Ah, yes, I know; and besides, dear mamma, I generally like the thought of the party beforehand well enough; and Alma is sometimes kind; or if not, and the reality is worse than I looked for, I can always now run up to 'Air Throne' the next morning, and laugh over my mortifications with the two Moores, till I get not to care for them. I was not complaining, mother dear; but I want you to face the real state of things; give up impossible hopes, and sell the necklace. It won't be wanted *ever* for such a day as you fancied; but we shall have other happy days—great days for the boys perhaps, or even for me, in some other way than marriage. You should hear how the Moores talk. Till these good times come there is a great deal of pleasure to be got out of the world, even in shabby clothes, and with all our worries and troubles, if you, mother, would only pluck up your courage again. Very nice bits come in between whiles for us young ones. Fun in the back sitting-room of evenings, while you and papa are sitting here dolefully; and delicious talks with the Moores in 'Air Throne,' and cosy times with dear old Mrs. Urquhart in the 'Land of Beulah.' Does it not sometimes make you dread misfortune a little less when you see that our great crisis—the crisis that you thought would break your heart—of our having to take lodgers into our house, has ended in making us happier? At least, I know I am a great deal happier since the Moores came; and Harry and the boys have quite got over the little mortification it was to them at first, in the fun of giving odd names to the new divisions of the house. If Aunt Rivers chooses to be ashamed of us, and to send us to Coventry, we can bear it; and you won't think us unsympathizing, will you, dear, for being able to get a little amusement out of what seemed such a terrible sorrow at first?"

Mrs. West thought of the contraction that came on her husband's brow whenever, in the course of their long, silent evenings, the sound of a bell from the upper story reminded him that he was no

longer sole master of the house in which he had been born, but she could not quench the light in Emmie's beautiful eyes by such an allusion.

"Whatever makes you happy is good for me," she said gently, stroking her daughter's hair back into its usual becoming waves over her forehead, and thus obliterating the little attempt to look like Katharine Moore, that had its terrors for her, though she said nothing about it. "I am sure I hope the Moores' coming will prove good for us all. As your cousins keep so much out of the way, I like you to have other companions."

"Friends," corrected Emmie eagerly; "friends who will do more for us than all the Riverses put together ever would. Mamma, if you do not mind my telling Katharine about the necklace, I believe her advice will be very useful. She gives lessons on two evenings in the week to a young man who is a working jeweller, and I dare say he could tell us what the necklace is really worth, or even manage the sale for us, if you liked to trust him. I know you don't wish Harry to have anything to do with it."

"My dear, I hope the young man does not come here! What would your father say if he met him, and heard that one of the young lady lodgers gave him lessons? He would think it a monstrous thing. He would want us to turn the Moores out of the house at once. I had no idea myself that Katharine gave lessons to young men—and shopmen too."

"Dear mamma, she thinks nothing of it. You must not judge the Moores as you would anybody else. They are to be judged in quite a different way; and no one but Katharine can explain it. However, you need not be at all uneasy. She never brings any of her pupils up to 'Air Throne'—that is Christabel's shrine, to draw and write and paint in. Katharine would not desecrate it, she says, by bringing drudgery there. She goes out to give her lessons, and I believe this is one of the evenings. Let me take the jewel-case to her and speak about it now; in another minute papa will come in; and I am sure you will feel happier for having come to a decision. It may be a long time before you and I can have such another long uninterrupted talk, and it would be a pity to let it go for nothing. Would you like to look at the necklace, and say good-bye to it before it goes, mamma?"

Emmie's finger, as she spoke, was on the spring of the purple case which she had previously taken from the box on her

knee, and her eyes looked pleasantly expectant, but her mother made a hasty negative gesture.

"No, no, dear, I don't want to look at it again. I said good-bye to all that it means for me a long, long time ago; and if you are not to wear it, I had rather never see it. Put the case into your pocket, and carry it to Katharine while papa and I are at dinner. If we women can manage the matter among ourselves, I shall be thankful. My conscience will be easier for not having drawn Harry into our little conspiracy, since I must conceal it from your father for the present. There, is not that papa's step outside?—run away, dearest—run away, and put the jewel-box exactly in its usual place on my dressing table, so that there may be nothing to strike your father's eye when he goes into the room to dress for dinner. I shall tell him that I have been obliged to part with the necklace, some day, Emmie dear; but I want to spare him the pain of knowing exactly when it was done, and of following us in all the painful little details of the business. The loss is his as well as ours, but we can spare him part of the degradation. Yes, run away, Emmie dear, and leave me alone. Your father likes best now to find me alone here when he first comes in, weary and out of spirits."

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS—A FIRST LOVE.

From the Confessions of Harry Lorrequer.

I know of no sensations so very nearly alike, as those felt on awaking after very sudden and profuse loss of blood, and those resulting from a large dose of opium. The dizziness, the confusion, and the abstraction at first, gradually yielding, as the senses become clearer, to a vague and indistinct consciousness; then the strange mistiness, in which fact and fiction are wrapped up—the confounding of persons, and places, and times, not so as to embarrass and annoy—for the very debility you feel subdues all irritation—but rather to present a panoramic picture of odd and incongruous events, more pleasing than otherwise.

Of the circumstances by which I was thus brought to a sick couch, I had not even the most vague recollection—the faces and the dress of those I had lately seen were vividly before me; but how, and for what purpose I knew not. Something in their kindness and attention had left an agreeable impression upon my mind, and without being able, or even attempting to trace it, I felt happy in the thought. While thus the “hour before” was dim and indistinct, the events of years past were vividly and brightly pictured before me; and strange, too, the more remote the period, the more did it seem palpable and present to my imagination. For so it is, there is in memory a species of mental long sightedness, which though blind to the object close beside you, can reach the blue mountains and the starry skies, which lie full many a league away.—Is this a malady? or is it rather a providential gift to alleviate the tedious hours of the sick bed, and cheer the lonely sufferer, whose thoughts are his only realm?

My school-boy days, in all their holiday excitement; the bank where I had culled the earliest cowslips of the year; the clear but rapid stream, where days long I have watched the speckled trout, as they swam peacefully beneath, and shook their bright fins in the gay sunshine; the gorgeous dragon-fly that played above the water, and dipped his bright wings in its ripple—they were all before me. And then came the thought of school itself, with its little world of boyish cares and emulations; the early imbibed passion for success; the ardent longing for superiority; the high and swelling feeling of the heart, as home drew near, to think that I had gained the wished for prize—the object of many an hour's toil—the thought of many a long night's dream; my father's smile; my mother's kiss! Oh! what a very world of tender memory that one thought suggests; for what are all our later successes in life—how bright soever our fortune be—compared with the early triumphs of our infancy? Where, among the jealous rivalry of some, the cold and half-wrung praise of others, the selfish and unsympathising regard of all, shall we find anything to repay us for the swelling extacy of our young hearts, as those who have cradled and loved us grow proud in our successes? For myself, a life that has failed in every prestige of those that prophesied favourably—years that have followed on each other only to blight the promise that kind and well-wishing friends foretold—leave but little to dwell upon that can be reckoned as success. And yet, some moments I have had, which half seemed to realise my early dream of ambition, and rouse my spirit within me; but what were they all compared to my boyish glories? what the passing excitement one's own heart inspires in the lonely and selfish solitude, when, compared with that little world of sympathy and love our early home teemed with, as, proud in some trifling distinction, we fell into a mother's arm, and heard our father's “God bless you, boy!” No, no; the world has no requital for this. It is like the bright day-spring, which, as its glories gild the east, display before us a whole world of beauty and promise—blighted hopes have not withered, false friendships have not scotched, cold, selfish interest have not yet hardened our hearts, or dried up our affections, and we are indeed happy; but equally like the burst of morning is it fleeting and short-lived; and equally so, too, does it pass away, never, never to return.

From thoughts like these my mind wandered on to more advanced years,

when, emerging from very boyhood, I half believed myself a man, and was fully convinced I was in love.

Perhaps, after all, for the time it lasted—ten days, I think—it was the most sincere passion I ever felt. I had been spending some weeks at a small watering place in Wales with some relatives of my mother. There were, as might be supposed, but few “distractions” in such a place, save the scenery, and an occasional day’s fishing in the little river of Dolgelly, which ran near. In all these little rambles which the younger portion of the family made together, frequent mention was ever being made of a visit from a very dear cousin, and to which all looked forward with the greatest eagerness—the elder ones of the party with a certain air of quiet pleasure, as though they knew more than they said, and the younger with all the childish exuberance of youthful delight. Clara Mourtray seemed to be, from all I was hourly hearing, the very paragon and pattern of every thing. If any one was praised for beauty, Clara was immediately pronounced much prettier—did any one sing, Clara’s voice and taste were far superior. In our homeward walk, should the shadows of the dark hills fall with a picturesque effect upon the blue lake, some one was sure to say, “Oh! how Clara would like to sketch that.” In short, there was no charm or accomplishment ever the gift of woman, that Clara did not possess; or, what amounted pretty much to the same thing, that my relatives did not implicitly give her credit for. The constantly recurring praises of the same person affects us always differently as we go on in life. In youth the prevailing sentiment is an ardent desire to see the prodigy of whom we have heard so much—in after years, heartily to detest what hourly hurts our self-love by comparisons. We would take any steps to avoid meeting what we have inwardly decreed to be a “bore.” The former was my course; and though my curiosity was certainly very great, I had made up my mind to as great a disappointment, and half wished for the longed arrival as a means of criticising what they could see no fault in.

The wished for evening at length came, and we all set out upon a walk to meet the carriage which was to bring the *bien aimé* Clara among us. We had not walked above a mile when the eager eye of the foremost detected a cloud of dust upon the road at some distance; and, after a few minutes more, four post-chaises were seen coming along at a tremendous rate. The next moment *she* was making the tour of about a dozen uncles, aunts, cousins, and cousins, none of whom, it appeared to me, felt any peculiar desire to surrender the hearty embrace to the next of kin in succession. At last she came to me, when, perhaps, in the confusion of the moment, not exactly remembering whether or not she had seen me before, she stood for a moment silent—a deep blush mantling her lovely cheek—masses of waving brown hair disordered and floating upon her shoulder—her large and liquid blue eyes beaming upon me. One look was enough. I was deeply—irretrievably in love.

“Our cousin Harry—Harry Lorrequer—wild Harry, as we used to call him, Clara,” said one of the girls, introducing me.

She held out her hand, and said something with a smile. What, I know not—nor can I tell how I replied;—but something absurd it must have been, for they all laughed heartily, and the worthy papa himself tapped my shoulder jestingly, adding,

“Never mind, Harry—you will do better one day, or I am much mistaken in you.”

Whether I was conscious that I had behaved foolishly or not, I cannot well say; but the whole of that night I thought over plans innumerable how I should succeed in putting myself forward before “Cousin Clara,” and vindicating myself against any imputation of schoolboy mannerism that my first appearance might have caused.

The next day we remained at home. Clara was too much fatigued to walk out, and none of us would leave her. What a day of happiness that was! I knew something of music, and could sing a second. Clara was delighted at this, for the others had not cultivated singing much. We therefore spent the whole morning in this way. Then she produced her sketch book, and I brought out mine, and we had a mutual interchange of prisoners. What cutting out of leaves and detaching of rice-paper landscapes! Then she came out upon the lawn to see my pony leap, and promised to ride him the following day. She patted the greyhounds, and said Gipsy, which was mine, was the prettiest. In a word, before night fell Clara had won my heart in its every fibre, and I went to my room the very happiest of mortals.

I need not chronicle my next three days—to me the most glorious “*trois jours*” of my life. Clara had evidently singled me out and preferred me to all the rest. It was beside me she rode—upon my arm she leaned in walking—and, to *combler* me with delight unutterable, I overheard her say to my uncle, “Oh, I doat upon poor Harry! And it is so pleasant, for I’m sure Mortimer will be so jealous.”

“And who is Mortimer?” thought I; “he is a new character in the piece, of whom we have seen nothing.”

I was not long in doubt upon this head, for that very day, at dinner, the identical Mortimer presented himself. He was a fine dashing-looking, soldier-like fellow, of about thirty-five, with a heavy moustache, and a bronzed cheek—rather grave in his manner, but still perfectly good-natured, and when he smiled showing a most handsome set of regular teeth. Clara seemed less pleased (I thought) at his coming than the others, and took pleasure in tormenting him by a thousand pettish and frivolous ways, which I was sorry for, as I thought he did not like it; and used to look half chidingly at her from time to time, but without any effect, for she just went on as before, and generally ended by taking my arm and saying, “Come away, Harry; you always are kind, and never look sulky. I can agree with *you*.” These were delightful words for me to listen to, but I could not hear them without feeling for him, who evidently was pained by Clara’s avowed preference for me; and whose years—for I thought thirty five at that time a little verging upon the patriarchal—entitled him to more respect.

“Well,” thought I, one evening, as this game had been carried rather farther than usual. “I hope she is content now, for certainly Mortimer is jealous;” and the result proved it, for the whole of the following day he absented himself, and never came back till late in the evening. He had been, I found, from a chance observation I overheard, at the bishop’s palace, and the bishop himself, I learned, was to breakfast with us in the morning.

“Harry, I have a commission for you,” said Clara. “You must get up very early to-morrow, and climb the Cader mountain, and bring me a grand bouquet of the blue and purple heath that I liked so much the last time I was there.—Mind very early, for I intend to surprise the bishop to-morrow with my taste in a nosegay.”

The sun had scarcely risen as I sprang from my bed, and started upon my errand. Oh! the glorious beauty of that morning’s walk. As I climbed the mountain, the deep mists lay upon all around, and except the path I was treading, nothing was visible; but before I reached the top, the heavy masses of vapour were yielding to the influence of the sun; and as they rolled from the valleys up the mountain sides, were every instant opening new glens and ravines beneath me—bright in all their verdure, and speckled with sheep, whose tinkling bells reached me even where I stood.

I counted above twenty lakes at different levels, below me; some brilliant, and shining like polished mirrors; others not less beautiful, dark and solemn with some mighty mountain shadow. As I looked landward, the mountains reared their huge crests, one above the other, to the farthest any eye could reach. Towards the opposite side, the broad and tranquil sea lay beneath me, bathed in the yellow gold of a rising sun; a few ships were peaceably lying at anchor in the bay; and the only thing in motion was a row boat, the heavy monotonous stroke of whose oars rose in the stillness of the morning air. Not a single habitation of man could I descry, nor any vestige of a human being; except that mass of something upon the rock far down beneath be one, and I think it is, for I see the sheep dog ever returning again and again to the same spot.

My bouquet was gathered; the gentian of the Alps, which is found here, also contributing its evidence to show where I had been to seek it, and I turned home.

The family were at breakfast as I entered; at least so the servants said, for I only remembered then that the bishop was our guest, and that I could not present myself without some slight attention to my dress. I hastened to my room, and scarcely had I finished, when one of my cousins, a little girl of eight years, came to the door and said,

“Harry, come down; Clara wants you.”

I rushed down stairs, and as I entered the breakfast parlour, stood still with surprise. The ladies were all dressed in white, and even my little cousin wore a gala costume that amazed me.

“My bouquet, Harry; I hope you have not forgotten it,” said Clara, as I approached.

I presented it at once, when she gaily and coquettishly held out her hand for me to kiss. This I did, my blood rushing to my face and temples the while, and almost depriving me of consciousness.

“Well, Clara, I am surprised at you,” said Mortimer. “How can you treat the poor boy so?”

I grew deadly pale at these words, and, turning round, looked the speaker full in the face. Poor fellow, thought I, he is jealous, and I am really grieved for him; and turned again to Clara.

“Here it is—oh! how handsome, papa,” said one of the younger children, running eagerly to the window, as a very pretty open carriage with four horses drew up before the house.

“The bishop has taste,” I murmured to myself, scarcely deigning to give a second look at the equipage.

Clara now left the room, but speedily returned—her dress changed, and shawled as if for a walk. What could all this mean?—and the whisper—

ing, too, what is all that?—and why are they all so sad?—Clara has been weeping.

“God bless you, my child—good by,” said my aunt, as she folded her in her arms for the third time.

“Good by, good by,” I heard on every side. At length, approaching me, Clara took my hand and said—

“My poor Harry, so we are going to part. I am going to Italy.”

“To Italy, Clara! Oh! no—say no. Italy! I shall never see you again.”

“Won’t you wear this ring for me, Harry? It is an old favourite of yours and when we meet again.”

“Oh! dearest Clara,” I said, “do not speak thus.”

“Good by, my poor boy, good by,” said Clara, hurriedly; and rushing out of the room, she was lifted by Mortimer into the carriage, who, immediately jumping in after her, the whip cracked, the horses clattered, and all was out of sight in a second.

“Why is she gone with him?” said I, respectfully turning towards my aunt.

“Why, my dear, a very sufficient reason. She was married this morning!”

This was my first love.

[Written expressly for Godey's Lady's Book.]

WE are told of a tree in the wild Norseland of sages, the mighty "tree Ygdrasil, every leaf a biography, every fibre there an act or word." In weaker soil of modern days, in narrower sheltered space, may not this root of life send up an off-shoot, strangely dwarfed into a mere straggling rose branch?—one blossom of which has already scattered some three or four leaves among the pages of this magazine, in the story of "Delphine's Caprice." Of the other sister buds on the same stem, if any are curious, will they not peep over the somewhat rickety fence, into

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ,

Authors of "Ingremsco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"Through the pass of By and by
You go to the valley of Never."

"One, two—one, two—" counted out the clear young voice.

Drip, drip, in dull accompaniment, the last raindrops beat down through the crazy spout, on the porch-step; the Greville rose dropped its bouquet sprays, drenched and spoilt, against the rickety lattice work, and, leaning so, half hid the river view which the porch framed in with a foreground of tangled garden. Such a tangle! No trim plots and borders, no smooth sward, but lush grass, where field daisies started up self-assertingly amidst the pinks and daffodils, and great rose boughs wove themselves in white and red and golden splendor, through the tall seringas and the climbing honeysuckles. Here and there a gold-green linden stood trying to shelter its winged blossoms from the wet; and a tulip-tree at the end of the grass-grown walk tilted its green and orange cups so over full of water. Almost within its shadow, shifting on the belt of reeds, the river crept up to its utmost limit, meekly and wanly, after the angry, lashing rain.

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A neglected garden, brimming over with roses; a quaint old weather-beaten brick house, with narrow front and porch upon the garden, and wide, many-windowed gable turned upon the village street. The entrance door stood there hospitably open within its swinging Venetian blinds; but a man who had paused before them, in the act of pushing them wide, changed his purpose as his glance strayed through the roses at the end of the porch. To swing himself over the low, vine-patched fence which ran down from that end, was the shorter way, and he took it.

The soft sod deadened his tread, as did also the thud of the rain from the crazy spout, on the worn step; so that he came half-way across the porch; unheard, close behind the figure which had turned him hither, from the street door.

In among the roses—white and rosy as themselves, in her white dress, and with the pink flush in her cheeks; lightly swaying to and fro, too, as the roses in the wind, while the first sunset ray, just breaking through rain clouds and dripping leaves, caught at the shining coil of her fair hair, as she moved.

"One, two—one, two—one—"

"Lost!" said a voice behind her; and a man's outstretched hand interrupted the flying shuttlecock, and caught it as it dropped.

The girl let her arm fall with the battledore, and turned round with a heightened color and a:

"Roger! how you frightened me."

"Didn't you expect me to-day, then, Blossom?"

"No! Miss Alethea told Kate yesterday that you wouldn't come home this Saturday as usual, for you had business."

"Did Aunt Alethea guess what was the business? And you, Blossom, did you not know I would be in haste to tell it to you?"

The girl made a shy, shrinking movement, and his eyes followed her involuntary glance. To the window yonder, where, perched on the sill, a girl sat reading, her book in her lap, the back

of her dark head turned toward the two. She certainly had no attention to spare them; but out through the one window came a hum of eager voices.

"Charlotte is here, did you know, Roger? She staid after the wedding. And oh, we've had a letter from Delphine, so bright, you must read it. Stay, here it is in my pocket. Oh, but wait, you must first come in and see our city sister."

"Charlotte will possess her soul in patience for another half-hour without seeing me. I must have a talk with you first, Blossom. Come out into the garden, 'Queen-rose of the rosebud garden of girls.'"

"You must mean Charlotte by that," said the girl, with her low laugh. "She is our cloth-of-gold rose—if you must be flowery—and that should be the queen, I suppose. However, if you do want me, and don't mind the wet grass—"

An old lover might have taken the hint; though indeed it was not meant to be taken. But this one, intent upon having her to himself, let her gather her dress about her and come with him down the porch steps.

There had been one of those fierce thunderstorms of which two or three unseasonably burning days were the sure precursors; and though the storm had seemed bent on destruction, in reality it had wrought much good. This the garden confessed in sweet, fresh odors, while the birds were singing a thanksgiving after their fright and peril by wind and rain. The girl came out among them, both her hands employed in deftly keeping her skirts from brushing the wet grass, though she gave but little heed to the shower of rain drops the trees were shaking down upon her. In the graveled path, the water was collecting itself into small rivulets and rapids; she threaded her way between them, and stood tiptoe under an old crab tree, peering up anxiously. A nest was missing. A nest she knew had held six birds; for only yesterday she had spent a good hour watching the mother feed her brood, regardless of the pair of curious eyes fixed on her. Certainly the nest was gone; blown away by the strong wind. And the nestlings—

One of the young birds was in the grass under the crab tree. Ugly, callow creature, drowned before a feather had grown, or a note of its promised song had been sung.

"They were just our number," said the girl, looking up with a sorrowful face. "And they are all scattered, not one left in the nest. Somehow I wish we were all together; that Delphine had not left us."

"Our sensible Margaret is never going to take to omens?" rejoined Roger, who was turning the dead bird over gently with his cane. "Here I've come down to Aunt Alethea's expressly to

tell you my news, and you won't listen, for grievance over an upset nest. I wonder whether you'll be a little sorry for me?"

There was something in the voice at those last words, which drew Margaret's startled eyes to him. "Sorry for you, Roger?"

"You haven't guessed, then, what business kept me in the city? I thought you might have divined it by putting two and two together; all that I have been saying latterly about South America, and the engineering expedition that is being fitted out. No? Well, to cut the matter short—" he said, turning slightly from her, and striking at the daisies restlessly with his cane—"I can find nothing else to do, and I sail with the expedition as one of the engineers, next week, Blossom."

Turned from her so, he did not see what a wan colorless Blossom she was, as he spoke. She had let the folds of her dress slip out of her hands, on the wet grass, while she stood looking up at him with wide dilated eyes; eyes that had a clear expression in them, as of one expecting a blow, yet who would bear it without wincing. And then the blood came back into her cheeks as he looked round at her.

"Are you sorry for me, Blossom?"

"Why, no, Roger," she said, bravely. "Sorry for you? When such an adventure lies before you? It is like one of the old dreams come true," she went on, steadying her voice, "which you and I used to have over those wild books we read together as boy and girl. Do you remember that birthday when Miss Alethea gave you the 'Swiss Family Robinson,' and we read it together, perched up here in this old apple tree? I suppose you won't go through all those hardships, of course; but you will see as much. I think it is just splendid."

"Blossom!" his face was kindling; "you do think that? You would not mind going?"

The two pairs of young eyes met, fully and frankly, each keeping back nothing from the other. His, eager, beseeching; hers, with a steady courage in their warm blue depths.

"I would not mind going if I were you, Roger. Of course with me it is different. I might dream all sorts of happy dreams, such as we used to build up together; but of course when I wake, I know my wanderings are bounded by the river on this side, and High street and Red Lion turnpike on the other."

"This is not the first time you have intimated this same thing," said the young man, moodily. "You may be right enough just now—for outside of a childish vision, this South America project could be nothing but dismal. But I don't see what reason you have of speaking of yourself as tied down here. It might be all very nice, perhaps, if you were really the eldest sister; but then, there's Charlotte."

"Where's Charlotte?" returned the girl, with a faint, mocking smile, just a thought bitter. "Yes, Charlotte is the first one of papa's half-dozen; but then, you see, she doesn't quite belong to us. So you would see, if you would come in and take a look at her. You have not seen her for these five years past; meantime, she has been so thoroughly grafted on Aunt Elliot's branch, that she has blossomed out into the rarest city hot-house bloom. You would never think she was one of us, with all our thorns and roughnesses and weather-beaten edges."

She ended quite playfully, with a nod down at her ill-used skirts, which she had forgotten to be careful of, and which were of course sadly wet and dragged in consequence.

But the young man caught the hands which were gathering up the dress.

"There is no one like my Blossom—no one. It is best to be natural, to be true; training could only spoil—"

"Surely one may be trained, and yet be true and sincere really," she broke in, wistfully, a troubled shadow in her eyes.

"I dare say. But when one is perfect without the training—"

"You are very good," she said, laughing. "For certainly the rest of us are absolutely without it. Delphine—I suppose she is going through a little bit of the process now. But I haven't shown you her letter. You don't deserve it, for not coming down to the wedding; but still, as I would like to know what you think of it—"

"You know, Margaret," he said gravely, while she was unfolding the much-crumpled sheet which she had drawn out of her pocket; "if Delphine had been my own sister, I would not have come to see her sacrificed to an old man like that."

"But she did it herself, Roger," answered the girl, rather wistfully. "Papa only advised. And Mr. Burger is as nice an old gentleman—"

"Precisely," the young man said, dryly.

Margaret's face flushed, and her eyes filled.

"Oh Roger! Do you really think it will turn out badly? But Delphine didn't mind; and we were all so sorry poor papa should be so annoyed by this affair of Kate's; Ambrose is so good-for-nothing, you know."

Something like a scornful gleam for an instant lighted up Roger's eyes, at mention of "poor papa," but he had the grace to hide it from the girl's sight.

"Ambrose, poor devil, he might keep his idle hands in his pockets until doomsday, if only the pockets were not empty." And then more gently, "Let me see Delphine's letter; there is no use in being blue over Kate and Ambrose just now. But I forgot, it is too wet for you to be standing here."

She put out first one little sodden boot, and then another.

"The mischief's done to them already; to me there is none, for I never take cold, you know. Do read it here, Roger, and tell me what you think of it; in-doors, the girls are all about."

"How you girls love to make puzzlers of your letters," he said, glancing over the open sheet she put into his hands, she waiting demurely before him. Upon which hint, she came and perched herself on the end of a drift-log, washed up by the tide, and looked over his shoulder, putting her hand across now and then to correct some error in his reading; an arrangement which, from the twinkle in his eyes bent on the paper, it might be inferred his speech was intended to bring about.

"All you poor dear Cinderellas at home. Don't you wish you were in fairyland and had a fairy god-father, and had been to the ball? You can't think, girls, what a splendid thing life is, and how I am enjoying it, and how good Mr. Burger is—only too good, for I dare not say how much I admire anything, lest, hey presto! I find it on my table or in my jewel-case or at my feet. Fancy, girls, having a real jewel case, filled by the very goldsmith to Lothair."

"Does Elliot remember, last summer when she inveigled me into trying to learn Latin with her, and dragged me behind her into the second page of her Virgil, how Tityrus, reclining under his beech tree, laughs at himself for having supposed great Rome to be a grown-up Mantua? I find myself laughing in like wise at myself, for certainly an overgrown Little Medlington was much my conception of New York. You see what it is to be a Little Medlingtonian all one's life."

"We sail to-morrow, but I shall manage to find time for another word first. O, good-bye. There, if a tear fell there, I am not going to brush it away, because I don't wish you to think I don't care. But *this* is not good-bye—and I don't want you to miss me too much—and I hear Mr. Burger at the door. Girls, just think what lovely things I shall bring you back from Paris."

"Dear, dear Daisy-blossom, and Kitty, and Elliot, and little May—and Charlotte, if she is still at home—and dear papa,

"All yours, Delphine."

"P. S. I would not like to say, what I would give for an hour in the old garden under the roses, and all you girls round me, listening."

"An hour in the old garden under the roses. Delphine is not the only wanderer will wish for that," commented Roger, as he folded the letter, but omitted to add: "all you girls round me, listening."

"But you think all is well with Delphine, Roger?" appealed Margaret.

"Yes, certainly, she seems happy enough. Margaret, would you be happy, the same way?"

The girl blushed rosily; but for all that, she

looked frankly into his eyes, as he turned round on her.

"That is different. Delphine is so young; only a little over sixteen; four years makes a great difference. Besides, I never did care for the same things as Delphine." She always had a taste for pretty things."

"And you haven't?" said he, looking at the young thing, so unconsciously pretty herself, with her elder-sisterly air.

"Not the same sort of pretty things. I like this untidy old garden, and the ragged rose bushes, and that purpling sunset glow broadening far over the river, away off to the Jersey flats. But to have a fine gardener trimming up here, would only bother me; and—as to trimming myself up with Delphine's jewels!"

Roger broke off a white rose-bud from a branch with which the wind besprinkled him just then; and the girl fastened it in her brooch without a word. They turned toward the house in silence, side by side. What use for words?

Each trusted the other without bond. By and by, when fortune should prosper him, and the fair hour should come for bonds—

When one is young and strong and full of hope and ignorant of loss, that Pass of By and by looks but a narrow defile, springing from the Promised Land. It is only experience, which teaches the lengthening out of the perspective, and the haze of the desert making a mirage perhaps at the farther end.

These two had crossed the porch toward the window where the girl still sat, her eyes riveted on the book in her lap. She was not aware of their approach, and had not stirred. The small head leant back against the window-frame; the dusky hair caught low upon the neck with a blue riband, and falling in one half-coiled, half-curling length to the waist; the delicate dark profile with its dreamy curve of the short upper lip and quiet shadow of dark lashes veiling the eyes fixed on the page pressed open upon her knee by one brown little slender hand—

"That's Elliot, all over," said Roger, smiling, watching her, and speaking low to Margaret. "As lost to everything around her as the Sleeping Beauty in the wood. Elliot!"

She looked up at the call and turned round, only half awakened from her book.

"Is it you, Roger? I did not know you were in town."

"Do you know anything in town, Dornröschchen?" he returned, laughing. "Are you awake enough for that? However, I am but just come. Will you let me in?"

The girl slipped down from the window-ledge and then one saw that it was too soon for the Prince to come to the Sleeping Beauty among her roses, for she was as yet more child than woman, dreaming there. One saw also that it was no win-

dow, but a half door, going into the room, which she pushed open.

"—Pretty?—yes, and fresh and bright; but about as much in place in society as if you were to wear dew-drops for diamonds in a ball room."

The soft voice, with the low laugh in it, came from the sofa, where, when the three entered from the porch, they saw, grouped together, the three occupants of the room. There was a slight silken rustle, as one of them turned to face the opening door, and Roger advanced with hand extended over the head of little May, who was sharing the foot-stool with Charlotte's dainty, sandaled feet.

"They told me I would never know you, Charlotte; but I don't think you have changed—so much."

The last two words were added as her hand lay in his, and he was looking down rather intently into her fair, upraised face. Very fair, with a childlike roundness of curve, a mouth like a child's for freshness and absence of expression, and innocent hazel eyes lifted with that half-confident and half-appealing gaze, which only a favored few manage to keep there after the lisp-ing age when it may not improperly draw down its natural response in a kiss. Roger had kissed her in brotherly fashion at parting, five years ago; and he looked half minded to do it again, until the silken sound of her movement as she gave him her hand, and the flash of the jeweled fingers in his, recalled him, and he made that little amendment of his: "so much."

It was not for the silks, however, nor the diamonds; but for a subtle change in Charlotte herself, which not only made itself felt by him, but drew forth a blunt contradiction from the girl beside her on the sofa.

"I can't imagine what you mean, Roger, by your so much! I suppose you didn't expect five years to give Charlotte blue eyes and black hair? They have changed her in every other conceivable manner."

Charlotte laughed softly. Evidently she had no misgiving as to what the years had done for her. They might have done a little more for Kate, she thought, as she glanced at her, leaning forward in her impulsive way, not over gracefully, from her side of the sofa. Kate was not a very pretty girl for a Burnley, Charlotte was thinking; though she had a pair of eager, bright gray eyes, that might have redeemed any face from insipidity; to say nothing of a carmine color, a wavy abundance of red-brown hair, slipping its coil now as usual, and a bright-lipped, frank, expressive mouth, which owned her somewhat abashed, as Charlotte said:

"It is certain time has not meddled much with you, Kitty. Nor you, Mr. Gillespie, for you see I recognize you at once. May, my dear child, your elbows are rather sharp—cannot you find Mr. Gillespie a chair? For I assure you," she

added, smiling up at him again, "it is not quite safe to trust every chair in the Burnley establishment, without a recommendation."

"Roger knows the arm-chair is rickety; and he came to grief on the piano stool the last time he was here," returned May, not moving, save to lighten her leaning posture on her sister's lap. "I wish you would go on with your story about that party, Charlotte; I'm sure Roger would like to hear too."

"Of course he would," he declared, avoiding the spacious-looking easy chair, and drawing forward another more trustworthy, out of which he leaned toward Charlotte, seeing that Margaret had possessed herself of the arm of the sofa, with a hand on Charlotte's shoulder, while Elliot had retreated with her book to the porch. "Of course he would; and especially would like to know who is this that shines like dew-drops in a ball room."

"It was Gertrude Oliver, she was telling us about," put in May, eagerly. But Charlotte, too wise to take up a broken thread of interest, said, in a careless way:

"Only a pretty little country cousin, or something of Aunt Elliot's, who has been spending the winter with us. I was telling May, perhaps she would not find a winter in society as charming as she thinks it must be; and instanced poor Gertrude, who would fain have fled from her first ball like Cinderella, only without awaiting the stroke of midnight. Mr. Gillespie, how long is it since we have met? Not since those first summer holidays, when Aunt Elliot let me come home from my convent-school, and—"

"But you said Gertrude Oliver liked city life better now, Charlotte, and that Cyril always helped her out at the balls—" broke in May, impatient of the digression.

Charlotte lifted her delicate brows with a good-humored smile across at Roger, taking him deprecatingly into her confidence as to the child's short-comings, as she had when May gave her account of his "coming to grief." It was rather Charlotte's way, to take people into her confidence; and it is wonderful upon what an easy footing this puts conversation at once. So that Roger and she were chatting like the old friends they should have been. She had not stated more than one bright anecdote of her gay city life, and he had been drawn on to speak, not uncheerfully of his South American project to his three new surprised listeners; when a voice behind him told him that he had a fourth.

"And quite right, too, Gillespie. An excellent opening for a young man. In my day such opportunities were rare enough. The golden tide never flowed my way, or the Burnley fortunes might not be at so low an ebb to-day. Let me congratulate you upon taking yours at the flood."

Roger rose to his feet at the voice, a little eagerly.

"You do think it a good thing, then, Mr. Burnley? I was afraid you would not," he said, with an involuntary glance at Margaret. "The truth is, it was the only thing I could get to do—there is so little in the way of engineering now—and, hard as it will be to exile myself—"

There could be nothing more courteous than Mr. Burnley's manner, as he stood yonder on the threshold of his own door, bending slightly forward, hat in hand, listening for the conclusion of Roger's speech. But, somehow, that speech broke off abruptly. Mr. Burnley's handsome aquiline face and keen dark eyes—looking all the keener and the brighter for time's silver seal upon his hair, which hardly succeeded in stamping him an old man—had taken on a doubly courteous show of attention such as at once sets the recipient of it at a formal distance. Roger faltered, then stopped short; and Mr. Burnley, after waiting a moment, with a calm, politely repressed lack of interest, for him to resume, remarked, blandly:

"Ah, you will not long look upon it as an exile. You are fortunate in having fewer ties to loosen, than most young adventurers. Your good aunt, Miss Gillespie, will miss your weekly visits sadly; as will my young people here. You are all young," he said, coming forward and seating himself in a didactic attitude carefully in the arm chair, not forgetting its weak points; "my old friend Miss Gillespie, perhaps the youngest of you all; and have yet to learn the truth taught me by a somewhat varied experience before I settled down in this dreary Sleepy Hollow here: namely, that he who sees the world, lives many lives, not one—that, as Lever, I think, rather well puts it, to him life is a succession of episodes, each perfect in itself, and each unshadowed by the one which passed before, and which it is his philosophy to regard as altogether past and gone. From this point of view, there can be no exile; and every change will have its own separate charm, you see," he ended, airily.

Roger had taken up his hat. He stopped to say with undisguised bitterness:

"If I remember your quotation aright, Mr. Burnley, there was added a maxim of La Bruyère's that such a philosopher must take care to laugh before being happy, lest he die before having laughed."

"You are not turning cynic, Gillespie, when I am recommending to you the school of Epicurus? What, must you go? My girls would give you a cup of tea if you would stay."

"I have not seen Aunt Alethea yet," he answered, shortly.

"Then of course we could not dispute her claim. Give her my compliments, my dear fellow, and tell her you have at least one friend to congratulate you and wish you bon voyage, and that she must look forward to the day when you will sail up our river again with flying colors,

and perhaps," ending with a smile, "a gallant consort steering by your side."

Roger made no reply, save by a hot, indignant flush, which was reflected in Margaret's face. The girl was standing now behind Kate's sofa, looking straight across at him, as were all the others; Kate with a friendly smile, Charlotte with a quiet little gleam of amusement in her eyes, May with hers filling fast—

"Oh Roger! Going away! But you don't mean this for a good-bye?"

"Softly, my little girl." Her father put his hand on her fair head and smiled down into her face, a childish likeness of Margaret's, but with tears dropping from the lifted eyes, while Margaret's were hot and dry. "We must not try to keep Roger, whose last moments are due to his good aunt. And, then, it is always best to cut farewells short," he said, as he rose to speed the parting guest with a cordial hand-shaking. "Good-bye, my dear fellow. We shall certainly miss you greatly."

Perhaps Charlotte, who was looking on from her corner of the sofa, was the only one who quite understood all this, and she was sufficiently unpreoccupied to be amused by her father's finesse, although a little sorry for his victim. Only one victim, she supposed; for if the affair were really anything to Margaret, she would never take it so meekly, so Charlotte judged by herself. For meekly Margaret did take it, submissively putting out her hand to be shaken after the rest.

It was May who braved her father by putting up her face to be kissed; and it was Kate who said discontentedly:

"I can't see the sense of bidding good-bye now. It is all so sudden. Roger, you will be here all day to-morrow, so what is the use in saying good-bye?"

Mr. Burnley interposed again:

"You are making too great a claim on our friend's time, my dear. You forget he has other friends."

"None that he cares for half so much as he cares for us," broke she in, bluntly.

The young man was not looking at her, was not looking at Margaret. His fate lay in the father's hands; he knew Margaret—he said it half bitterly to himself—was not one to be carried off with "a touch to her hand, and a word in her ear." His fate lay in the father's hands: and just now, as he looked, Roger saw he could expect nothing from him. After awhile, when he should come back from exile—

He missed that wistful, imploring glance which Margaret had given him while he was looking at her father. When he turned to her, the lashes had fallen over the anguish in her eyes. Her hand lay cold in his, as he said, hurriedly:

"None that he cares for half so much. All the same, as Mr. Burnley tells us, it is best not to

linger too long over farewells. It is good-bye now. I shall leave by the midnight train to-night."

And then, Margaret's eyes were lifted to his.

After all, could more be added to their leave-taking?

As Roger Gillespie was stumbling out through the hall (not that twilight had more than begun to gather there), he brushed against some one evidently lying in wait to open the door for him. As she did so, and the gray light fell on the sharp old-wrinkled yellow face under the gay Madras turban, the young man stopped, and put out his hand to her.

"Good-bye, Aunt Hussy," he said, huskily.

Now, there were few duties devolving on Hussy as maid of all work of the Burnley house which she so thoroughly enjoyed as opening the door to visitors. It is the best of all openings for a little gossip; and since the old woman had in bygone days treated the greater part of Little Meddington society now ranging from youth to middle age, to gingerbread and toffy, she naturally found gratitude enough still lingering in the breasts of the Burnley visitors, to make them more or less willing listeners. She certainly had bought Roger Gillespie's indulgence by a Benjamin's share of those childish dainties; and yet with that hasty "Good bye, Aunt Hussy," he broke from her now.

Was there something in the manner of his saying it which had startled her as she stood in the doorway and watched him pass up the street? "Good-bye, and him just come! It's a short word easy thrown away on the old 'oman. I might be saving of my time, too, and not bother to beat biscuits to-morrow for tea, but let them keep the Lord's day on cold bread, if he drops in. Eh, eh, they're all prideful when they get away into the world. It's Aunt Hussy this, and Aunt Hussy that, as long as they live here. But I didn't think Mr. Roger would be that easily spoiled. Maybe I 'spect too much. Haven't I often said to myself: "Hussy, don't you 'spect nothing, honey. There'll be a kitchen in heaven, and the niggers will be sure to find their way there."

With this humble view of the future life, Hussy went back to her own domain, questioning whether cold bread or biscuits were the proper diet for a Sunday tea; Sunday with the old woman—when not in a good humor—being, as it is with many another one, a fast day.

While Roger Gillespie, ignorant of his offense, and the Sabbatarian debate it gave rise to, was walking moodily along, turning over in his own mind Mr. Burnley's courteous but emphatic farewell. Yes, Roger would leave town to-night. It was evident that he was not to be permitted to see Margaret again; therefore, the greater the distance between them the better. Somehow, he felt that the earlier start, the earlier coming

back to her. There was the farewell to Aunt Alethea to be gotten over. But that pain, at least, was put off for awhile; for Roger was turning his back upon the town, striking into the lonely reed-fringed path along the river shore.

Nearly an hour later, when Roger was crossing the green, towards a little brown wren-box of a house standing back among the locusts on the opposite side of the shady street, a little brown wren of an old lady came briskly out, and unlatched the gate of the neighboring house upon the corner. Roger, still wrapped in his own thoughts of Mr. Burnley's farewell, did not see; and the little old lady, without observing who was coming, passed in through the gate, between the burning bushes, which later in the year would glow fiery in the sunshine, yet not be consumed; and went up the brick walk between the grass plots, where wild violets and stars of Bethlehem were disputing possession with the grass. She tripped up the steps, and without paying any attention to the great brass knocker, opened the hall door—into the last century.

If our great-grandmothers could come again to earth, revisiting the houses where they once were welcome guests, there are not many drawing-rooms where they could seat themselves with any comfortable degree of stiff-backedness. But there, at least, they would be quite at home glancing round at claw-footed tables; straight, gilt-studded, red morocco sofas; embossed fire-screen where gray dames ride blue horses up blue and brown roads, against the trellis-papered walls, from which other stiff and stately dames look down in friendly recognition. The drawing-room door within that corner house seemed always set wide for such old-time guests; one could almost hear the rustle of their brocades within, and think to catch the shimmer of the young matrons' gay cap-ribands in the dimness. The present visitor, however, had not come to sit with the ghosts downstairs, but groped her way up in the dark, and knocked at the front chamber door. An idle form on her part, as she at once turned the lock, and entered

There remained just sunset light enough, coming in through the white curtains, to point out all the details of the daintiest, prettiest room imaginable, cheerful with bright-flowered cretonnes and pictures of sunny landscapes, and the most luxurious of easy chairs spreading its arms invitingly in the window.

But first, the visitor turned to the bed, where she stooped to kiss the sweetest, most patient face that ever looked out from a saint's aureole.

"You always come just when I want you the most, Miss Alethea," her saint said.

"Are you, too, afraid of the twilight?" asked Miss Alethea as she seated herself in the arm-chair.

"Afraid! Is it not the pleasantest hour in the twenty-four?"

"Does it last only one hour?" asked the skeptical old lady. "Time certainly limps with me, when he comes to the last stage of his day's journey. What do you find to like in it?"

"A quiet time for the gathering up of all the broken threads of the day's thought."

"Some people find pleasure in self-communing, I have heard," said Miss Alethea, with still a skeptical tone in her voice. "While others again can't abide themselves, and run away in a cowardly fashion."

"But some of us can not run away, and so must get used to ourselves."

She said this in no way of complaint. "Only a saint can bear it—" Miss Alethea declared. "I have no hope of being canonized."

Her saint laughed. She was so accustomed to hear her friends call her good, that she had long ceased to contradict the assertion. A stranger would never have guessed that she had won her sainthood through suffering; for there was nothing of an invalid in Bessie's appearance; nothing worn nor emaciated; nothing tossed and uncomfortable; no trace of a battle with pain or restlessness. Nor would one have suspected her age, which was past thirty. It was now twelve years since an accident, seemingly slight at the time, had resulted in this deprivation of all power to walk or stand, or sit up farther than her pillow permitted. But nature, in shame for the ruin she had wrought, stopped there, and left Bessie's face just as before the accident. Twelve years of captivity had made no mark. There were the same soft, glossy brown tresses lying on the smooth, fair brow; and the violet eyes which dilated wonderfully. Women with those eyes are usually impetuous and reckless. Fate had taken care to keep Bessie from being either, by setting her aside from all action.

She was lying very quiet now, thinking, Miss Alethea supposed, thoughts appropriate to the hour; while that more earthly-minded little lady looked out from her window, and remarked to herself that really those pretty Brown girls passing yonder by the court house, might have chosen better than to advertise their name in their new walking suits; pity all those gay, bright colors are out of fashion, that used to make girls bloom out like June flowers, in her youth. "And—there's the corner street lamp lighted—not half dark, either; and who should that be, scrambling down the lamp-post, after lighting it, but young Shannon, in his policeman's uniform? So he's on Dogberry's force, eh?—well instructed in his duties, no doubt, and can call at the ale-houses, and when he takes a thief, let him show himself what he is, and steal out of his company. Well, well, that ever little Medlington should come to need three policemen!"

"Miss Alethea—"

It was Bessie's voice that startled her.

"Miss Alethea, I am sadly worried about Kate Burnley."

"About Kate Burnley?"

"This unfortunate affair with Ambrose."

"Oh, it is Kate's little heart-affair that troubles you? I don't see why it should, since it does not trouble Kate." And Miss Alethea settled herself again comfortably in her chair.

"You cannot approve of it, Miss Alethea; Ambrose is—"

"Rather good-for-nothing, but that is a common foible."

"And Kate is good for so much."

"A very poor world you would make of it," her old friend said, bluntly, "you would mate all the good-for-nothings with their kind, and *vice versa*. Now, I have seen a horse and a mule pull together up a hill, where a pair of horses would have balked, or a couple of mules have grown obstinate and refused to budge."

"But it is just the hard up-hill pull I would fain see Kate spared."

"Level roads are apt to be tiresome, Bessie, and do you not think it possible for Kate to like Ambrose for just what you think reprehensible in him? Laziness is fascinating to some weak minds; and for Kate to find Ambrose waiting for her at the corner, with nothing better to do than to walk up street with her, you may depend upon it, is not disagreeable to her, no matter how many times a day it occurs."

"I cannot think with you," Bessie said, gently. "There must come an end to the walks. And to see one you care for, with so little regard for the responsibility of life, must be a heavy trial. Did you ever hear, Miss Alethea, that Ambrose is not steady?"

"I hear a number of things I don't think it necessary to believe," was the evasive rejoinder. "But indeed, if Ambrose is a little inclined to be wild, there could be no better check on him than Kate is."

"You see, Miss Alethea," (the sweet voice from the bed had just a touch of reproof in it,) "you and I are looking at the question from such different stand-points. I am thinking of Kate's good."

"If we take upon us to be Providence, my dear," said Miss Alethea, dryly, "we must not forget that the good-for-naughts also are to be arranged for. And even if they were not, who shall say what may be best for Kate herself? It has been my lot, in a rather long life, to meet a few such as our Kate: girls who began life almost too honestly, who, desiring to be true and loyal to their natures, were brusque and absolute in their straight-forwardness and set one wondering what manner of women they would make. One sees well enough that the material is good, and that there is plenty of it; but alas, experience tells us that side by side with shapely, useful garments, are often found the narrowest and most comfortless, and both are

cut out of the same cloth. Only an unpropitious fate has shaped the niggardly ones, and a more generous one the others. It is your narrow cut that is fashionable now, I know, with any quantity of trimmings stitched on to hide the meagerness; but if our Kate is to be clipped and pared away like that, to suit the times—! For me, give me the old-fashioned days, when, if two young people loved each other, they were willing to climb the hill together, and the girl did not draw away her hand because the young fellow pulled his out of an empty pocket," said Miss Alethea, with a sudden change of manner and some heat.

"That is all very well, if Kate—"

"May I come in?"

At that voice at the door, Miss Alethea flushed up uneasily, and she muttered something under her breath, of eavesdroppers; but Bessie's face could not have looked guilty, for the new-comer stooped and kissed her, before she came forward to the window, kneeling down in the glow of lamplight from the street corner, with a hand on Miss Alethea's knee.

She knelt there a moment in silence, half smiling unwittingly, before she said, clasping her hands behind her head, in an attitude more spontaneous than graceful:

"What a glorious evening!"

"Certainly, with the whole atmosphere reeking after the rain. To be sure," added Miss Alethea, wickedly, "if I had been walking, and the effect of the damp had been red cheeks instead of rheumatism, my estimate of the evening might be different."

Kate's cheeks were no less carmine for the allusion, but she made no other reference to it.

"Have you been walking, Kate?" asked Bessie.

"Only a little way."

"Is it not imprudent to be out so late by yourself, dear?"

Kate looked at Miss Alethea with a roguish twinkle in her eyes, but said, frankly: "I was not alone, Bessie. Ambrose was with me."

"Oh Kate! What will your father say?"

"I never promised my father not to walk with Ambrose, Bessie. I would never see him, if I did not walk with him sometimes."

"Your father has the first claim on you, dear."

"I know it," Kate said, heartily, as if she had gone over the ground more than once, and disliked it. "I'll not marry without my father's consent, but I'll not give Ambrose up."

"He should give you up. It is not right in him to stand between you and your father," Bessie said, softly.

At that, Miss Alethea rose and went away quietly out of the room, without waiting to hear Kate's answer. She was afraid of being tempted to give the answer herself; and, just for perverse-ness, it might be in Ambrose's favor. He had

his faults; so had Miss Alethea, for that matter, and she hoped no one disliked her for them. Yes, Ambrose was a favorite of hers. And yet, she was not very sure, if all she heard was true, that Kate might not be well rid of him. But as to Bessie's definition of his duty, Miss Alethea had her doubts whether it was in man to give up—simply because her father thinks she may do better—a pretty girl who loves as Kate loves good-for-nothing Ambrose. Bessie Archer might have been equal to such renunciation, or any saint living above the temptations of this earth; but Miss Alethea rather thinks a strong man, sauntering about with his hands in his pockets, takes a different view of life from that of a weak woman etherealized by suffering.

Somewhat later in the evening, Miss Alethea was sitting alone in her little low parlor. The windows were wide open to the garden behind; and through them crept in subtle wafts of fragrance, and the glimmer of the crescent moon. But Miss Alethea's glow of lamp-light quite quenched that: a glow more brilliant than usual for even her cheery rooms. And yet when the door opened, and Kate stepped down the one low old-fashioned step into the parlor, she found her old friend seated in the midst of all that light at her center-table, attempting neither to read nor to work, but with her hands folded in her lap, absolutely idle.

At the click of the door-handle, Miss Alethea turned, with a far-away look in her eyes, a look as if she were gazing out over those distant Southern seas where the lad, her lad, had told her he must go away. She had forgotten Kate and her troubles; even that chief trouble of hers, Ambrose. She came back to it with a start, as Kate, on her foot-stool, half averted for the tears in her eyes, was telling her:

"It is all settled, Miss Alethea. I am to give Ambrose up."

"I hope he is equally resigned," Miss Alethea answers dryly, after an instant.

"He didn't like the idea at first, but now he thinks it best."

"He is very good, no doubt. Yet I don't think you, or Bessie through you, need plume yourself upon such an easy bit of work as influencing Ambrose. And if, now that you have broken with him—"

"Broken with him, Miss Alethea. When I have just promised over again to be true to him as long as I live!"

"Even if he thinks it best for you to give him up, I suppose," said Miss Alethea, coolly.

"But he is going away for my sake entirely, and—"

"You forget you have told me nothing, child."

It does not take long to tell. Bessie has friends in Baltimore, and she can obtain the promise of employment there for Ambrose. Of course, if

there is anything in the young man, it will come out; if not, he is better away from Kate than here. Bessie has not said this to Kate; but the inference is a just one.

As for Kate, she will not admit that there is any risk in this trial trip of her lover. And yet, standing at her upper window of the old house on the river, she has watched many a bonny ship sail down the broad stream, which never returns again. Not that it founders at sea, but it trades at another port.

CHAPTER II.

"MAY-BE'S ARE NOT AYE HONEY BEES."

"It is wicked in me not to be grateful," Kate said, with a sob. She was not looking upon life as contentedly as might a philosopher, on this bright day when Ambrose was to go away. "Yet I don't care in the least that he should make money, Miss Alethea. He has enough for me; I would be contented with a crust. King Midas's gold could never repay me for this parting."

"Crusts are dry eating, though they are more digestible than gold. If I remember the fable aright, Midas grew a little weary of his wealth. I'd let Ambrose try and make his fortune, however, if I were you. If he be worth your loving, he will come back; if not—"

"I am not afraid of that 'if not.' I know, too, it is best for him to go; for though I might very well live on half a crust, he, strong man as he is, would starve on it. But oh, Miss Alethea, if I were only like Bessie, and saw good in every evil! But things happen to torment one, not to do one good. Do you think I could ever be as saint-like as Bessie?" Kate asked.

Miss Alethea laid down her work on the parlor window seat, where Kate had perched herself. It was a sort of instinct, that she might speak the more emphatically.

"I hope not. Bessie needs patience, and she has her share of it. But you, who must be up and doing, need a morsel of temper, as well as some other helps, which are certainly not becoming to a saint."

Just then, the front door bell rang, as if pulled vigorously.

"It sounds like the doctor's ring; I called him in at last, the other day, for my rheumatism," said Miss Alethea, listening.

Kate laughed, and flickered away a tear which had been gathered upon her lashes.

"The doctor, Miss Alethea? But which? I did not know you had yet been able to make your choice, since we lost our old one."

"You may well say which, child. Dear heaven! how the doctors have swarmed on us, who thought we should have trouble in getting a

new one. Some have tarried for a night, and like the dew departed with the sun. Others like May-flies staid for a day, and 'then went no one knew whither. Some have sent their wives as spies into the promised land, but there wasn't a Mrs. Joshua among them. However, seven are staying to see how they like us."

"Really seven, Miss Alethea?"

"Really, you can count up. But why seven, I can't understand. Perhaps the seven sleepers influenced them, or the heavenly number and the earthly number, which together make seven."

"I must say, I don't see the application, Miss Alethea, pills and blisters having very little to do with heaven. Unless, indeed, in sending the patients—"

"Dr. Kearney," said Miss Alethea, with an amused face. And then, "Dr. Kearney, Miss Burnley."

Kate slipped down from her window-seat, blushing and laughing, as Dr. Kearney declared he was glad to hear from her that he was such a public benefactor. And then the young man possessed himself of the low chair opposite Kate's, without regard to his own length of limb, (he had a way of looking at ease in any position, this young fellow,) and said he had come to ask a favor of Miss Gillespie.

Miss Gillespie humbly hoped it was in her power, as she liked to grant a favor.

"You can manage it without any trouble, I think, and I shall be so much obliged. I want you to introduce me to your neighbor."

Dr. Kearney had just hinted as much, yesterday, and though Kate is not strictly Miss Alethea's neighbor, with the breadth of the green between the two houses, still Miss Alethea had not the slightest objection to introduce the doctor to her, though she had half a mind to tell him of Ambrose; only that it was not her business to confess Kate's secrets. But now when he repeated the hint quite plainly, and with Kate sitting opposite—

Miss Alethea bethought her that she had a neighbor in the great house to her left, and though she was rather surprised that Dr. Kearney should particularly desire to meet the old lady, she said it would give her pleasure to introduce him to her friend, and proposed that as she was to take tea here this evening he should come too. The doctor looked rather blank at this proposal. It is evident that in his section of the country, they do not give invitations to tea.

"I am afraid you misunderstood me. I thought Miss Archer never leaves her bed," he said.

"Miss Archer! Bessie! But she never sees strangers."

"Dear Miss Gillespie, you will manage it in some way. You women are so clear in such matters. I can't tell you what a—well, I may as well use proper words. It will certainly give me great

pleasure to see the case, which you must own is a singular one."

Now the camel's back of Miss Alethea's patience was quite broken by that mere straw of a word, "pleasure." "So after all, it is only the case that would give you pleasure; not to know Bessie, whom we think it a privilege to be near. You do not even think you could do anything for her. I'll not torture our saint by making a spectacle of her; so you must ask some one else to introduce you."

Miss Alethea was speaking so fast and angrily, that she had forgotten Kate, who leaned forward, and put her hand on her arm. One always feels foolish when caught scolding like a fury; so Miss Alethea was considerably crestfallen, and tried to explain her position in a mild expostulating way:

"It is a mistake of Doctor Kearney's, my dear. You know very well that Bessie will not see him."

But Kate said, eagerly: "I am so glad you wish to see Bessie. I have so longed for it. Who knows, if we can only manage it—"

"Who knows all the nonsense a girl can chatter?" Miss Alethea interrupted. "What possible good could the doctor do Bessie?"

Kate was not looking at her, but at the light-haired, beardless young man; looking at him as if she would fain read his thoughts. "Do you think you could help Bessie?" she asked, softly.

"I can't tell until I see her," was the brief reply.

"But you will try?"

"I would like to," he said, still more curtly.

"What are you thinking of?" cried Miss Alethea, losing temper with Kate, "Do you consider what you are doing? Bessie is resigned, peaceful, at rest. Would you disturb her with helpless longings and vain hopes? Do you wish to make a woman out of a saint?"

"Yes, certainly," said Kate, flatly; "if Doctor Kearney can cure her."

So Miss Alethea was vanquished. Young people are never satisfied with things as they are, but must always be striving to improve them. Miss Alethea could have held out against the doctor; but Kate and the doctor were quite different. And so it came to pass that when Dr. Kearney took his leave, after due inquiries as to the rheumatism, he carried away with him a promise that Miss Alethea would persuade Bessie to see him; not professionally, but as a friend of her old friend.

"There is Ambrose coming up to say good-bye to me—" remarked Miss Alethea, coolly, a while later, at her window upstairs, where Kate had followed her. "I have a word for him; and then you might as well come down and say good-bye too."

Perhaps Miss Alethea changed her word a little when she went into the parlor and found him so quiet and subdued, and shaking hands in a fash-

that somehow made her bright old eyes dim enough to need spectacles to recognize this happy-go-lucky Ambrose. Did the parting with his old friend cause that woe-begone look? Or did he guess whom she had left upstairs?

"I have just been saying good-bye to Miss Bessie," he was telling her. He had absently taken the same chair in which Dr. Kearney had managed to be sufficiently at ease. It looked absurdly disproportioned to this young man, who had rested his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands, and was staring absently across at Miss Alethea, with his careless blue eyes as gloomy as overcast skies. "What saints you women can be!" he went on. "I can't tell you what kind things she has said to me. I shall do my best to merit her esteem; for, Miss Alethea, she is right—I have been wild and good-for-nothing. If you women didn't take us in hand, the most of us would go to the bad."

"Pray tell Kate so. We have long tried to shake her faith in your virtue. Perhaps your confession would make her think more highly of her friends' sagacity."

"Dear Kate! I have left her in Miss Bessie's charge. I know she will be the greatest comfort to her," Ambrose said.

"Only be good-for-something, and Kate will need no comforter. There, stay quiet where you are; or, better, take this arm-chair, instead of that stool of repentance, and I'll send you something much better than an old woman's scolding."

And so Miss Alethea sent Kate down to him, that they might have their leave-taking more comfortably than in the street. Bessie might have found fault, and scolded in her gentle way; but Miss Alethea thanked fortune that she was not Kate's father, and she did not think it at all necessary for her to sit in her parlor if Martha were awaiting her orders in the kitchen for dinner, or if she had left her work-basket upstairs in her own room.

Presently she heard the front door open, and, peeping through the curtain, she saw Ambrose walking away. He looked as grave as an undertaker, poor fellow! Parting with one's sweetheart can't be so very pleasant, Miss Alethea infers; though practically she knows nothing about it. A little while afterwards, Kate too steals out of the house. Miss Alethea can see through the window curtains, that she has been weeping; and she wonders how far Ambrose is worthy of the child's tears.

Poor Miss Alethea to fulfill her appointed task, went reluctantly to Bessie that evening, earlier than her usual hour, "blind man's holiday." She had many misgivings anent that task. Not that she was at all afraid of interference; usually she was like the rest of us, fond of making neat little drawings of the lives of others, never thinking how apt they are to take the pencil out of our

hands, and finish the sketch with such scrawls as any child might be ashamed of. But to break in upon the quiet saint's rest up there, with the clamorous hopes, and fears of life—?

However, it had to be done, since it was promised; and Miss Alethea was not one to dodge the inevitable. She faced it before she had been many minutes in her arm-chair in the window, looking across at Bessie at rest on her pillows.

Miss Alethea dragged the doctor violently into the conversation; and then did not know what to do with him. The name fell flat; Bessie's chief interest in the outside world lay among those whom she had known in her girlhood, before she was a prisoner.

So Miss Alethea must try again:

"Kate tells me their Hussy has had him. I fancy the old woman would like to have the whole seven, with a different complaint for every one of them. For myself, I hope to die of something old-fashioned, which would not have puzzled even our old doctor, bless his soul! But Hussy, Kate says, approves very highly of Doctor Kearney, declaring that there are some doctors that Providence always gives in to, and the medicine he prescribed for her, made her feel like three different women at once."

Hussy's speeches always made Bessie laugh.

"Do you too like your new doctor?" she asked, unconsciously giving Miss Alethea a help over a hard place.

"Yes, very much."

"Is he said to be very skillful?"

"Yes, wonderfully so. How can you ask, after hearing Hussy's experience? Would you like to see him?" said Miss Alethea, carelessly.

"I, Miss Alethea! Not for the world!" Bessie answered, as if frightened.

"I did not mean professionally. He is quite a remarkable man. You might like to talk with him."

"You know I never see strangers," was the grave reply.

"But a doctor! Bah, child! No one minds a doctor. I'd see him if I were you, just to kill time."

"I never felt the need of killing time, and I hope never will."

"You are lucky," Miss Alethea returned, dryly.

"Bessie," she added, suddenly changing her game, and playing her cards desperately as any gambler, "if Doctor Kearney can do you any good, don't you think it your duty to see him?"

She did not answer for a moment; and then only repeated "Do me good?"

"If you haven't grown any worse in all these years, why do we take it for granted that you can't grow better? Nature never comes to a complete stand-still."

"I have not been standing still," replied Bessie, in a hurt tone. "You are so used to seeing

I will, you do not remark any change in me. I am steadily growing worse. I shall not be with you much longer, dear friend."

"Then there is the more reason why you should see a doctor," Miss Alethea said, stoutly. "You have no right not to make an effort to recover."

"But I am sure no physician can do me good."

"Don't run down the profession. God employs means, and the poor earthly vessels of doctors are not beneath His use. Besides, Saint Luke was a physician. He should give you some respect for the faculty."

"I do not lack respect, only I am contented to remain as I am. If I were as near Him as the poor woman bowed down with an infirmity, as many years as I have been, I do not think I would put out my hand to touch the hem of His garment. Do not misunderstand me," she added, hurriedly. "I only mean to say that I feel safe where I am. That I have been borne gently over the hard journey of life, and am afraid to be well and strong, and forced to turn back to it. Please do not urge me any more."

What more could be said? The quivering lip and contracted brow, as Miss Alethea bent over the pillow, warned her to obey; and she went home with the full conviction that she had given Bessie a sleepless night, and had disappointed the doctor.

As Miss Alethea reached the grass-plot under the locusts at her own door, she caught sight of a strange-looking figure crossing at a little distance in front, to the green. Now, any figure which she did not recognize, in the whole village, would have been a matter of surprise to Miss Alethea; but this one, in short dark blue and crimson skirts, black bodice, and quaint little cap of gold thread lying like sunshine on the fair plaited hair—?

Miss Alethea stared after it in no little wonder, as it went steadily on, across the green, under the elms.

CHAPTER III.

"There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its storied thunder laboring up."

The figure which Miss Alethea had watched as it crossed the green, came slowly over to the other side, and then along the churchyard wall under the lindens, and down the short street to the river. It paused once or twice, now speaking in a questioning tone, apparently in some unknown tongue, to a group of children; now showing a slip of paper to a woman in a doorway. But the woman only shook her head over the paper, uncomprehendingly, and stepped out on the pavement to look after the stranger as she went; and

the children stopped and stared after her, until the next instant they found her in their play. So she passed on, until she found herself suddenly at the end of the street, her farther way barred by a ricketty, over-grown garden fence.

She had glanced up at the many-windowed gable, as she went by; she had half paused before the door, which stood invitingly open within its broad Venetian blinds; but a snatch of song from the other side of the vine-covered palings caught her attention, and she moved on that way instead.

It was such a clear, fresh young voice, that it was like a sort of welcome to a weary ear, and with a faint smile crossing her pale lips, the woman followed the fence, until she came to a gap in the tangle of rose-branches. There she stood still and peered over into the garden.

A girl was moving about among the roses, her dress gathered up in one hand, while the other held out at arm's length a dripping watering-pot, which sent ever and anon a refreshing shower in among the thirsty roots. A slim, dark girl, with a mass of dusky hair caught together, half curling, by a riband, and dark eyes with a gleam of wonder in them, as she turned just there, and met the gaze fixed on her.

It was as in a dream she saw a face and figure which assuredly might seem to belong rather to her dreams than to the real life of Little Medlington. The figure in that quaint peasant dress; the face startlingly wan and colorless, save for two bright hectic spots in the thin cheeks, and for a sort of glazed light in the pale eyes. They held Elliot as in a spell.

"Mees—Mees—"

The stranger stretched out a bit of paper to her over the fence; and Elliot set down her watering-pot, and went and took it from her. She turned it over in her hand, in a surprised way, then looked up into the woman's face.

"Why, it is in the German handwriting! Delphine's name!"

Looking into the woman's face, she saw she was not understood; so Elliot ventured on her self-taught German timidly enough:

"It is my sister's name; you wished to see my sister? But she is not here."

"Not here?" The stranger was quick to understand now, though the trans-Atlantic origin of Elliot's German was undeniable.

"No; and she is not Miss Delphine Burnley any longer. She is Mrs. Burger."

Elliot said it in a tone of pardonable pride in the great family match. There had been in it a jealous, passionate pain for her; Delphine, her twin-sister, the sunny side of her own nature (for it was only where Delphine touched her, that Elliot brightened), Delphine taken from her, had filled her with a childish, jealous resentment against successful bridegroom, against father and

Yvet who had suffered the carrying away. Yet somehow the pain was not incompatible with pride, and unconsciously she was looking at the woman as if she could expect to find the same impression there. Of course she could not, but neither could she have expected the deathly pallor she found on cheeks and lips that had been pale enough before.

"Married! Then I am too late!"

"Too late;" Elliott repeated the words, as if she might have failed to comprehend their meaning in that foreign speech.

"I thought it might be only a betrothal, when I read it in the paper. I am not mighty in the English speech. See there!" She drew a slip of paper out of her pocket as she spoke, and Elliott saw that it was the printed notice, from a Baltimore paper, of the marriage of Delphine Burnley and Frederick Burger, formerly of Munchen, Germany.

"But I do not understand," said Elliott, puzzled. "You could not have known Delphine. Oh, perhaps you know Mr. Burger, and hoped to find him here before he went abroad? If there is anything you wished to ask him—anything he could do for you?"

She hesitated over the words, for somehow, though the woman's dress was of the poorest, looking in her face she could not think she was a beggar.

"We could send word through my sister. Mr. Burger is very kind—"

"Very kind, is he?"—sometimes a chance word or tone is like an electric shock, and touches keenly a nerve at which one loses one's self-control, and must cry out; the woman's eyes flash fire, and she speaks impulsively, words which she had shut her lips resolutely upon, the instant before—"Very kind, is he? To which one of his wives? To your sister or to me?"

If she had struck Elliott a sudden blow, the girl could not have reeled more helplessly. She puts out her hand catching blindly at the rose bough brushing against her; perhaps, the sharp thorns piercing the tender palm, recall her to herself, though she takes no heed of the two or three crimson drops falling on her dress when she lets go the branch.

"His wife? You?"

There is shrinking in the word—horror—repugnance unutterable; but not a doubt.

The woman before her draws back. She had not intended to deal such a blow as this; not to this innocent child who has nothing to do with the wrong to her. She had not understood the English words which Elliott in her agitation made use of; but horror and dread are the same among all people, and Elliott's gesture needs no interpreter.

It needs no interpreter now, when she signs to her imperiously—she is speaking her labored German again:

"I must know what you mean. Those are no words to dare to utter, and then to draw back from their explanation. His wife? I must know what you mean."

The woman's lips move; but a long, gasping cough takes her breath. She puts up to her mouth a cotton handkerchief, which she draws away again with other red marks upon it than the scarlet threads in its border.

If Elliott sees, she gives no sign; it does not make her pause. She has no time for pity now. She puts her hand on the other's shoulder with a swift, imperative gesture, though shrinking away the next instant.

"Speak. I must know all. Who are you?"

It is no simple, innocent child, now, that looks full into the woman's eyes. The woman, recognizing the change she has wrought by a word, gazes at her, frightened, relenting, and sees the time is past for sparing her.

"Forward I must, for backward can I no more," she says, under her breath. And then, aloud:

"I am Hanne Burger, Friedrich Burger's married wife. It is nearly fourteen years that he married me, in Munchen."

The gasping cough comes back, and interrupts her. But she has said enough; as much as Elliott Burnley can take in all at once.

"Delphine!—Delphine!"

The cry goes up, fierce and strong and bitter, in her soul. But not a sound upon her lips,—her white lips set in a stern self-control. For Delphine's sake, she forces herself to look the woman in the face.

It may have been a pretty one enough, once; long years ago, the girl would have said, though in reality the woman was not far past thirty. But the prettiness must have been chiefly that of youthful bloom; there is not much left in the shrunken figure, in the sunken cheeks, the hollow eyes that meet Elliott's almost quietly. There is nothing tragic in them; nothing of a great grief, nor of an outraged pride and love which might have startled the girl into sympathy. There is anxiety indeed; almost a hungry anxiety.

Elliott has roused herself, and is repeating the woman's own last words:

"Fourteen years ago. That was just before he came to America. Where have you been all these fourteen years?" demanded Elliott. A dreadful certainty is in her heart; but for Delphine's sake she must not leave room for one doubt.

"So eben vorher?"—Elliott has made a confusion of her adverbs, at which Hanne Burger is at a loss; she repeats them with a dubious shrug of her shoulders as giving up the riddle.

"I know nothing, mein Fräulein; only that he deserted me there in the Fatherland, just after the honeymoon, that one little spanglemoonth that seemed so bright. I was a trusting fool in those

days; a little straw-head, made giddy by the first rushing wind that had not yet blustered itself out."

In Hanne's pause for breath, Elliot waits breathlessly, her eyes still on the woman's face, as if they could help to interpret. Elliot is making a literal translation in her own mind, as well as she can catch the unfamiliar sounds she knows only from books. "The rushing wind that had not yet blustered itself out"—how should she guess at its free rendering into "the harum-scarum fellow that had not yet sown his wild oats?" Could that be said, even fourteen years ago, of old Mr. Burger, the crop must have been a strange aftermath indeed.

But no such rendering puzzles Elliot; she is absorbed in following the next words:

"Could I know that he was double-hearted? I believed in him as I believed in the dear God. And he deserted me. I was beneath him in rank; but I was not cast down so low, for all that, as to seek him, to stoop to him, when once it was clear to me he wished to shake me off. But now—"

Now? Elliot has not understood half of those hurried, and yet labored, broken words. Yet it is wonderful how much there is in human pain and passion, that makes itself comprehended. Even brute pain can move, without an outcry, and the thrill in this woman's subdued voice—

Now? Elliot's eyes press the question, though her lips do not move.

—"Now that I am death-sick, and my child helpless, it would be but a raven-mother that would not seek help for her. And so, when I found no hope for my life, I set myself to trace him, to force him to take the father-place to the poor one whom I must leave. He would be prosperous enough, I warrant; it is not weeds that spoil. So when I heard Friedrich Burger had come to this evening-land of yours, I took my need-penny, put back for a day like this, and followed him to Baltimore, and there, woe to me! by chance read this."

Once again, she holds out the printed notice of the marriage; but this time Elliot does not glance at it, but averts her eyes. The marriage! Suddenly she turns sharply on the stranger.

"You have proof?" she asks her, almost fiercely. "Any one may come to us with a lie. You can give me proof?"

"Freely, gracious Fräulein. There are letters here, if it please you to read them."

But Elliot draws back her hand.

"No—no. You must not give them to me. Let me have your address in Baltimore—you must go back there—"

"Yes, certainly, I must go; my Liebling misses me. But, hurry and tarry, is a saying full of kernel; I must not come and go, and nothing won thereby. Friedrich Burger—he is gone away; but is he nowhere to find?"

The girl clinched her hands together.

"Have I then to beg your mercy for her—my sister? The blow must fall—it must fall. But at least suffer us to break it to her; do not you strike at her unawares. Give me your address, I say, and go away in silence from this place where all know her."

"And then?" says the woman, doubtfully.

Elliot's ashen face flamed up.

"And then!—you need not fear; you shall have him, your fine husband."

The girl in her passion hardly knows what she is saying. She is silenced by the woman's hand on her arm. It recalled her to herself; and there falls a dead hush between them, they standing together, but not looking at one another.

A hush just broken by Hanne Burger's hacking cough, and then by her saying:

"I can trust you. There is my address in Baltimore, over the sugar baker's,"—separating a slip of paper, in the German writing, from the bundle of letters she replaces in her pocket. "I will wait there, to-day over eight days; and you will let me hear—for the child's sake?"

"One moment." Elliot, with nervous vehemence, is drawing a ring from her finger. "You may need money, meantime; yes, for the child's sake. I have no money, but this ring will bring it; it is an emerald, it is worth a great deal. No, you must not refuse, it is worth nothing to me, nothing. I shall never wear it again."

Perhaps, the elder woman, looking in her face, understands whose gift it was. But she only puts it back on Elliot's hand.

"We have enough for the present; it is not grace-bread we want, but our rights." And then, more gently, as she sees the girl recoil at her touch: "Ei, Fräulein, you shrink; it seems to you I am a spider-foe, full of venom. But it makes me sorry to hurt you, only, I must, for the child's sake."

The two stand looking at each other, in the pause; Elliot having hardly heard her, thinking only of Delphine. And then:

"I will wait. You will let me hear soon!"

"Soon." Elliot's voice is a hoarse echo of hers. And the woman turns slowly away, and Elliot stands gazing after the retreating figure. Gazing as one stunned, who does not see, but merely stares out vacantly. Only one thing she has life enough to do: to slip the ring—Mr. Burger's gift—from her finger, to set her foot upon it as it falls, treading it down into the sod. And then—

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ,
Authors of "Ingremsco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin
Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III. (CONTINUED.)

Elliot never knows how long she has been standing there. Hussy's voice, from the porch in the dark, calling her in to tea, comes like a shock to rouse her. With a hard breath, she turns and goes indoors. She remembers there is no one at home but little May; Margaret and Kate have driven out with their father to pay a country visit, where they would be sure to be kept to tea. Better go in, than have Hussy coming out here after her. Elliot glances behind her with a shudder; it is as if that woman might have left some visible trace of her presence there.

Only Elliot's experience of Hussy's sharp eyes and her dread of being questioned, could have enabled her to bear herself as she did through the next hour or two. It is over at last, like a vague bewildered dream; May has gone to bed, and Elliot is sitting alone on the porch steps, when she hears the door bell ring, and presently Hussy's voice answering it:

"I'd ha' tried the homepatrick treatment, if there'd been a doctor of that sort in town," she is telling her visitor. "We did hear some talk of the high-deensionists, but somehow they're never come down our way. It don't so much matter, now you're here, sir; but last summer, we were in a bad way, I can tell you. Why, there was a hundred head a' children deceased in one week."

Now Hussy is out-Heroding Herod in her slaughter of the Innocents; but Dr. Kearney comes into the drawing-room, laughing.

"Will you let Mr. Burnley know I am here."

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Aunt Hessa? Or, stay, perhaps I had better see Miss Burnley."

"Meaning Miss Margaret, sir? For, Miss Charlotte, that's really Miss Burnley, she's gone back to the city, to her Aunt Elliot."

"Meaning Miss Margaret."

Hessy likes to prolong a conversation, else she might at first have given the information that both Miss Margaret and Miss Kate are with Mr. Burnley, spending the evening in the country. But Miss Elliot is at home, if Doctor Kearney wishes to leave his message with her, although, indeed, Hessy thinks that she herself would be the more reliable recipient of the two. Doctor Kearney, however, does not seem to agree with her, as he immediately answers that he will see Miss Elliot.

The girl has hardly heeded the colloquy within doors. She is in the habit of concerning herself so little about the visitors who come and go, that she sits still, in the dark bewilderment of her own thoughts, until she is startled out of them, by Doctor Kearney standing before.

"Miss Burnley, I meant to ask your sister's sanction in speaking to you; but since she is not at home, I must come with my errand direct to you. I have been sent for to see a poor woman who is dying, and she asks incessantly for you."

"Asks for me?"

The flickering rose-bough overhead cast shadows upon Elliot's face, as she looks up at him from her place on the porch-steps.

"For you. She has not long to live; and I think the few hours that are left her, would be more restful, if you would come to her."

But the girl shrinks back, with a frightened gesture.

"I, Doctor Kearney! How can I? She cannot want *me*. I have never seen any one ill. I have never seen death. If Margaret were here, she would understand, she would know what to do; she has gone where people have sent for her. Or even Kate could. But I! I cannot."

But Doctor Kearney smiles down upon her, reassuringly.

"We, none of us, know what we can do, until we are tried. Most women are born Sisters of Mercy. And I hear you have the gift of tongues, Miss Elliot," he adds, smiling again. "This woman is a German; she has probably heard of you as one who could understand her speech, which none of the rest of us can do. She can hardly live through the night, and she must have messages to leave her friends, which none of us are able to take. Your coming will be the greatest possible comfort to her."

He talked as if Elliot's coming were quite a matter of course; and indeed, it appears to be, for she is standing up before he has finished speaking. Silently she leads the way in through the drawing-room, and is passing to the front door, when Dr. Kearney asks if she had not better leave some message for her sisters—"And, pardon me, Miss Elliot, but I must prescribe a wrapping of some sort, for the night is chilly."

The girl catches up a shawl from the table, but pays no heed to the other part of his advice; so that, as they meet Hussy on going out, it is Doctor Kearney who tells her that he is taking Miss Elliot to see a patient of his, and will bring her safely home. And so the two go away together.

As they pass up the street, Dr. Kearney would have given Elliot his arm, but she either does not understand, or does not care to take it, and he walks by her side without repeating the offer. There is a half moon, so that the street lamps are not lighted; and Dr. Kearney is not sure whether the ghastly look on the girl's face is lent by the pale moonbeams. He says, half-stopping, half-forgetting the urgency of his errand to her—

"If it is too much for you, Miss Elliot, we will go back, and I can try to find some one else who can speak German, and who will understand the woman."

Elliot gives a violent start.

"No—" she says, breathlessly. "I will go on; I must go on."

The doctor looks at her doubtfully.

"You are sure you are able to go through it?"

At that, she turns her face round on him. Pale enough, indeed. But Doctor Kearney has looked in too many a woman's eyes to see how far he could trust her to bear; and he has never been reassured with a steadier light of resolution than shines in those which Elliot Burnley now lifts to his. Without another word, he leads the way on across the green, where he catches sight of the twinkling of Miss Alethea's light among the locust trees, and breaks the silence, to say:

"If you would like to have Miss Gillespie with you, we can stop for her. I would have done so before, only that I thought you would have your sister. But if you choose now—"

"No. There is no need."

He has nothing to say to the impatient tone; and she has quickened her pace. They are near the edge of the town now, and Elliot looks round at him.

"You are taking me out of town?"

"It is the last house but one. She was attempting to walk back to We—, as I understand, when the hemorrhage came on, and she was taken into the cottage—Anne Wilton's cottage."

"Anne Wilton? Do they know anything of her, there?" asks the girl, in a voice which to her own ear sounds startlingly abrupt. But apparently it does not to her hearer, for he answers, without any surprise:

"Only that she had been observed wandering about the street, earlier in the day, showing a bit of paper which no one could read; it may have been in the German hand-writing, may it not, as that is different from ours? But here we are—" he breaks off—"How is she now, Mrs. Wilton?"

The woman moves aside from the doorway, out of which she has been peering anxiously.

"Just the same, about, doctor, and has asked again for Miss Elliot, by what I can make out. You'll be pleased to walk right in, Miss Elliot. This door. It's to be hoped the poor thing 'll have more rest, now you are come. Though what she should wait with you so much, Miss Elliot,—and she a stranger in the town—"

Elliot pauses, with the light full on her face, from the lamp in the woman's hand.

"I saw her in the street to-day, Anne," says Elliot, calmly. "And I spoke German with her. You can none of you understand her speech; of course she asks for me, who can. For no one willingly dies without one last word."

The girl says this without a blush, not thinking of herself in this moment of peril. Innocent dumb creatures learn cunning in presence of danger; the lapwing cries away from the nest she would fain save—and Elliot, in her instinct to hide the secret of Delphine's peace, lies, perhaps for the first time in her life, and does not blush.

The next instant, she is in the room, which she has been told is the chamber of death.

CHAPTER IV.

It is a poor place enough, for the presence-chamber of that Sovereign of us all. But death standing on the threshold makes even the meanest place solemn and mysterious; and so Elliot feels it as she comes softly in. There is not much light in the room, but what there is falls on the bed, and on the deathly face upturned upon the pillow. There needs but one glance to make Elliot sure of its identity; although she knew before, too well, who this eager watcher for her must

be. The eyes are full of eagerness now, shining out of the pale face.

"Elliot Burnley, Elliot Burnley—" the pale lips murmured, clearly enough, for all their faintness and their German accent.

"Here is *Miss* Elliot Burnley; she has been kind enough to come to see you, my good woman," announces, with some emphasis upon the prefix, proper Anne Wilton, who from making all Miss Elliot's pinafores when she was knee high, has ever since held a sort of vested interest in the young lady. True, the stranger not speaking English, might not be supposed to understand, but then, as Mrs. Wilton reflects, a body never can tell how much these foreigners really can make out, or do not choose to from sheer contrariness.

The house-mistress' voice draws the dying woman's troubled glance to her for one instant, and then it wanders back to the dark eyes answering her own. She looks at Elliot restlessly, and then at the doctor and Anne Wilton.

Elliot follows her glance, understanding it. Can she send them out of the room? She would feel safer beyond their observation. But then will it not seem strange to them, suspicious?

She forgets that they have nothing to suspect; that to them there is nothing extraordinary in this longing of the dying to speak a few last words to some one who can understand them. To the Spartan boy, with the secret fox gnawing at him, it may have seemed that every outstretched hand was put forth to uncloak him; to Elliot it was as if her very longing to wrap herself in secrecy must betray her. She says, hurriedly, in German:

"They cannot understand you, they will know nothing of what you tell me, if only you do not mention names—the name of that man who betrayed you, nor my sister's name. But you have nothing to do with *her*," adds the girl, forcing her quivering voice to say it steadily. "We will not speak of her. But anything else that you may wish to speak of—"

"My child,"—of whom or what else should the mother care to speak now?—"My child."

"She is at the address you gave me? Rest in peace, then—she will be taken care of."

"You promise it?" The woman in her sudden strength of anxious motherhood raises herself on her arm, her eyes fixed on Elliot.

At the movement, Doctor Kearney, who had been standing at the foot of the bed, comes forward hastily, and places her again upon her pillow.

"You must make her understand that if this happens again, I must send you out of the room," he says, with a touch of unconscious blame for Elliot. "Her hours of life depend upon perfect repose of body; and as much repose of mind as you can help her to, Miss Burnley," he adds, more gently.

Elliot turns her white face round on him.

"You put too heavy a burden on me, Doctor Kearney," and then, without waiting, she has turned again to the bed.

"You must be quiet, you must rest. Surely you can rest, when I have promised you."

The woman closes her eyes with a faint sigh, which is only a deep breath of satisfaction, and then in the stillness, she seems to lapse into a half-slumbrous, half-unconscious state, during which Anne Wilton has stolen softly from the room, the doctor takes his place at the moonlit window, and Elliot sinks down in the arm-chair which Anne placed for her at the bedside. Elliot's eyes fix in a dreary, hopeless gaze upon the upturned face.

There is no pity in the girl's eyes; they are hard and cold, for she is not thinking of the painful lines, the ghastly hue of suffering there, but of Delphine.

Delphine's bright, gay face, her merry eyes, her laugh—

Elliot shivers, and casts a shrinking glance over her shoulder. It was as if that laugh really rang out, mocking her. Would Delphine ever laugh like that again?

She forces herself back to that upturned face upon the pillow, with, perhaps, too fixed a gaze, for under it the wan eyelids quiver, and the eager, restless eyes look up.

"I had forgotten," she says, in a hurried voice, so faint that it is hardly more than a whisper.

"You do not know about my Gretel. You will not let them despise her, my poor, helpless child—you will not let them use her hardly, because God has forgotten to be sorry for the unhappy one?"

"God has forgotten?" Elliot repeats, in an awed undertone, her questioning eyes upon the woman's face. But if any explanation of those strange words were intended, the wandering senses cannot hold it fast; they have let it glide beyond reach, with all painful things, half hidden by the mists that creep up from the river of death. She has relapsed into that half-conscious state again, and so the moments wear slowly on and on.

Once or twice, Doctor Kearney moves noiselessly from his place at the window to the bedside. The second time, he stoops over Elliot and says, in a carefully lowered voice:

"The end may be not far off. When next she stirs, ask if she will see the priest now."

That frightened look comes into Elliot's eyes again. How dare she stand between this soul and its peace? Yet—Delphine's peace—

Elliot's ideas of the confessional all are of the vaguest. It never occurs to her that it might not be required of Hanne Burger, to confess her husband's sins. And to have Delphine's story laid bare thus—

No, anything rather than that. She lifts her

eyes to Doctor Kearney with a flash of defiant resolve in them.

It puzzles him, ignorant of having angered her. But he has no time to speculate upon its meaning; for his patient cannot have been asleep, that faintest whisper of his has roused her. She opens her eyes on the two faces above her.

"Sh! she sleeps—my Goldchild, my little lamb. The dear heaven give—"

And then the dawning light of recognition comes into her eyes, as they rest upon Elliot; and a faint smile just touches her lips.

"Whereof the heart is full, passes over the mouth. I was dreaming of my Gretel, as when she was a child in swaddling clothes. Still! is that not the dead-bell?" she cries suddenly, in an altered voice, half raising herself on her arm, then sinking back with the white fear upon lips and cheeks.

Elliot in the startled silence hears it—the slow bell, stroke after heavy stroke, and for an instant catches the infection of the other's superstitious dread. But then she says:

"It is the church-clock—listen—striking the hour."

The dying woman seems to be counting, as the waves of sound flow and ebb upon the rising wind. She has grown calm again, and as the last bell dies away, she says quite quietly:

"It will strike few more for me; I shall not be over night here. But there is yet something—yes, certainly, the letters—mein Fräulein, I would trust them to you."

The faint hand groping under the pillow, in closing on a small packet hidden there, has pushed aside something which falls clattering to the floor.

It is nothing heavier than a bead chain, but in the hush, even that sound is startling.

Doctor Kearney is stooping down for it, so does not see the packet which, at his patient's gesture, Elliot takes from her hastily. He has lifted the rosary from the floor, and holds it up before the fading eyes. They stare blankly at it, at first, then into them dawns a sense of his meaning. Her lips move, and she turns her head feebly toward Elliot.

"The dear God forgive me, I had forgotten him."

A compulsion is upon the girl, too strong for even her resisting will. She cannot choose but say:

"You wish to see the priest?"

"Yes," faintly; she puts her hand out feebly for the rosary, and when it is given her, she crosses her two hands upon it, on her breast, and her eyes close again.

Elliot is trembling so that she is fain to sink down in her chair at the bedside. She says, breathlessly:

"If he comes—the priest—you need not tell him all—you will save her—my innocent sister?"

There is no answer. The pale lashes lie without a quiver on the sunken cheek, the two hands are at rest over the rosary upon her breast.

Doctor Kearney keeps his fingers on her pulse, for one long moment, then lifting himself, looks at Elliot as if to ask if she has spoken as he bade her. And the girl answers him in a dull hopeless tone (for what else can she do?), that his patient will see the priest now.

She is glad when the doctor leaves her alone for an instant in which she may slip the packet of letters into her pocket. Why she should care to do it secretly, when their secret must be dragged to light so soon, she could not have told, only it was an instinct with her, to guard Delphine just this little while she might. To-night nothing could be done—to-morrow—

She crushed down the thought of to-morrow, with that resolute will of hers, which has laid dormant within her until now. She dares not think—this girl who has always been the dreamer, suddenly feels a longing for action. If there were but some work that she could do, some heavy task to wear out body and mind— But only to sit still and fold her hands, and wait—

She sits very still there at the bedside, and folds her hands one on the other in her lap, in the very attitude of patient waiting. It is thus that Anne Wilton finds her, when she comes in at the doctor's order, and takes her seat at the door; and it is thus that, only a few moments later, Margaret and the doctor find her, he having called for her on his way back from the priest's house.

Margaret is for going up to her, but when Elliot turns her head, and forces herself to give her a little ghost of a smile, accompanied by a warning gesture of silence, the elder sister desists, throws off her shawl, and softly seats herself in the chair by the door, which Anne vacates for her. The truth is, Margaret is bewildered. Elliot, the child Elliot, of whom no one at home even thought of expecting anything practical, has she grown suddenly into a woman, more at home at that bedside than Margaret herself would have been, and wise, and self-controlled—?

Elliot!

The wonder of it holds Margaret's thoughts, while Doctor Kearney goes forward, and once more lays his touch upon his patient's pulse. And presently the door opens again, and shows Anne Wilton cautiously ushering in the priest.

Before he has stepped half across the narrow floor, Doctor Kearney lifts himself, and lets the worn wrist drop out of his hold. Then he turns, and takes Elliot's hand, and lays it on his arm.

"Come," he says to her, in a hushed voice. "Come. Your watch is ended."

But she shakes him off.

"I will never leave her while she lives," she says, in breathless defiance, looking first at him,

then at the priest. Her eyes are flashing, her heart throbbing in her throat, like a helpless creature at bay. If she stirs, who knows what may be said of Delphine? "Never, while she lives."

Doctor Kearney looks down, startled at the wild beautiful creature. Then he answers her quickly:

"No." He signs to the priest, "It is too late. She has passed out of our reach."

The next instant, Elliot is out in the street. The chilly night air brings her to herself, and she finds herself walking on between Doctor Kearney and Margaret, her hand in Doctor Kearney's arm. She hears the two speaking to each other, speaking quietly—

Elliot could have shrieked aloud, at the pain tearing at her very heart-strings. But she gives no sign. She lets them lead her on until they pause before the wide-gabled house, the many windows darkling above them, and only a feeble gleam of lamplight in the hall, as Margaret opens the door.

"I see papa has not sat up for us," the young house-mistress says, in a tone which shows neither expectation nor disappointment. "I should have liked him to be here to thank you for your kindness to our Elliot, Doctor Kearney. You will have to take my thanks instead," she says, putting out her hand to him. "Many thanks," she adds, as if to make up for Elliot, who has dropped his arm and said nothing. "And, Doctor Kearney, if you have an idle evening to while away in an idle house, we will be glad to show you we have not forgotten."

Elliot stands clenching her hands together, hearing, but hardly understanding the few words that pass; until the door is shut, the key turned in the lock, and Margaret, taking up the lamp, comes and puts her arm round her sister.

"Dear Nell, come and sleep with me to-night. All this has been too hard on you, who are not used to anything of the kind."

Anything of the kind! Of course, if Elliot had her senses about her, she would know that Margaret's words could not possibly apply to Delphine's trouble. But she has not her senses about her; the strain put upon her has been too heavy, and she is half maddened under it. So she draws back, and lets Margaret's caressing touch fall off.

"No. I shall be better alone. I would rather be alone," she manages to say, steadily. And Margaret, not understanding her, and hurt by her repulse, first puts the lamp into her hand, and turns away in the dark to grope for a candle for herself.

Yet in the quiet of her own chamber, the elder sister's heart softens toward the child, and, putting off her slippers from her little bare feet—(her way lies past her father's room)—she creeps to the

door of the chamber which Delphine and Elliot always occupied together, and seeing a gleam of light across the threshold, she puts her lips to the keyhole, with a whispered entreaty to be let in; she could take Delphine's place for one night at least; she could not bear to think of Nelly, alone.

Delphine's place!

But for those words, the wretched girl might have risen from her crouching posture at Delphine's bedside, with her arms flung out despairingly across Delphine's empty pillow. But for those words she might have unbarred the door, and let the faithful sister in, and in her arms in the long watches of the night, might have whispered the dead woman's story, and afterwards have had none of her own to live through. But "take Delphine's place!"

"Don't trouble about me, Margaret," she says, steadily. "I am going to bed now. I am very tired indeed."

And Margaret, feeling herself repulsed for the second time, goes back to her own room, not so softly as she had come, but with an angry impatience in her tread.

Elliot listens to it along the hall, and then she rises from her knees—she has not been praying, though—and begins with trembling hands to unfasten her dress. She must get to bed, she must put out her light, or who knows if Margaret might not come again, or Kate.

As she lets her dress slip to the floor, something heavy falls against her feet. It is the pocket with that bundle of letters in it. She puts her hand in and draws it out, and goes away to the table where the lamp is burning; not meaning to read anything that may be written therein, but merely to glance at the handwriting which should be Mr. Burger's, and which, being his, she has seen often enough in Delphine's letters to recognize now.

And then she sees, in a page turned down outside the bundle, that it is the German writing, which of course he would not use in his letters to Delphine.

She will not read one word. She turns the package over, and the lamplight falls on the blank page. The lamplight in a yellow stream.

How could that have brought that temptation to her?

For suddenly, in a sort of frenzied haste that cares nothing for the pain, she snatches off the heated glass shade, she holds the packet in the unguarded flame. And when all the letters are in a bright blaze, she lays them on the hearth, and watches, eager-eyed, until the last spark burns away, and leaves only a tiny heap of blackened ashes.

Then with hurried hands she undresses, and creeps to bed, and lays her burning cheek on Delphine's pillow.

Delphine is saved!

Charlotte's descriptions of city life may have accustomed the Burnley girls to the brilliancy of the Elliot mansion, so that they would have taken it as a matter of course. But the little country cousin's country cousin coming one winter evening to see Gertrude Oliver, for the first time since he had brought her there nearly a year ago, might be excused for his ignorance, as he paused on the front door steps, and glanced up at the gayly lighted windows. Was there an inopportune ball going on in there?—and ought he to defer his visit? But it is not in man to be so near the end of his desires and then turn back. Gertrude was in the house, and had he not ridden nearly a hundred miles to see her?

Still, even after the servant had opened the door, Geoffrey Forbes hesitated whether he should not leave a message and a promise to call the next day. While he was halting, a lady who in crossing the hall had heard his inquiries for Miss Oliver, came forward to answer them. It was Mrs. Elliot, who at once recognized him, and insisted that he should come in. She was only receiving visitors, not entertaining guests.

"You could not have been more fortunate in finding the girls in," she said. "I have to insist upon one evening in the week at home, if only to let our friends know we really possess a home. How is dear Mr. Oliver? I hope he has not regretted his kindness in letting me have Gertrude?"

"Mr. Oliver is well. A little fearful lest you may have wearied of so long a task as chaperone."

"He need not be. There is nothing pleasanter than the charge of two beautiful girls. One might be troublesome, but never two. I absolutely could not let Gertrude off last summer when we were going to the sea-side, and dear Mr. Oliver must not think of taking her this winter. Charlotte would be quite lost without her friend."

"Mr. Oliver would be unhappy if opposed by two ladies," began Geoffrey, certainly piqued by Mrs. Elliot's summary way of deciding for others.

"We must not let him oppose us. Gertrude ought to have another winter in society. You will not recognize her for the shy, uncomfortable girl you brought here last winter. She has charming manners, and is a universal favorite. The old men are every whit as much in love with her as the young ones."

"She must be wonderfully improved," said Geoffrey, with more sarcasm than he would have acknowledged. He was looking down upon the little lady, with her softly animated manner, and her graceful gestures, with those pretty white hands of hers—had they succeeded in moulding Gertrude into a youthful copy of this? A vision rose up before him, of the child as he had last seen her, that evening when he had brought her here, and left her in Mrs. Elliot's charge, and

she looked up at him with tear-bright eyes, yet with a gay little mocking of what she supposed to be May-fair manners in her farewell. The recollection made him suppress a smile, as Mrs. Elliot went on:

"You can easily understand how very important this winter is to Gertrude, if only in the one item of acquaintances. Besides, I could not spare her on Charlotte's account. I do not think you saw Charlotte when you were here."

"I had not that pleasure," replied Geoffrey, shortly.

"Some people think her prettier than Gertrude. I do not, though her style is uncommon; hazel eyes, with fair hair and complexion. Cyril used to rave about her beauty, when she first came home from school. But I am keeping you standing here instead of introducing you."

Geoffrey followed Mrs. Elliot upstairs into the drawing-rooms, which he found quite full of people. She beckoned him on through the throng, evidently in search of some one—a lady on a sofa, with what Geoffrey contemptuously termed a boy seated beside her, and talking with a fluency his elders might envy.

"Pardon me for interrupting you, Mr. Tremaine," said Mrs. Elliot, smiling blandly on the youth, as on a favorite. "I have brought Gertrude an unexpected pleasure, which will, I know, make you lenient to me."

Gertrude had risen whilst Mrs. Elliot was speaking, and was holding out her hand to the tall, grave man before her. "Cousin Geoffrey!"

It was certainly Gertrude, standing there smiling and shaking hands with him. But *that* Gertrude from whom Geoffrey had parted less than a year ago?

His first glance took in the fact that she had grown much taller, and was far more beautiful than ever she promised to be; and that her dress was furbelowed to the full extent of the then prevailing fashion. His second glance, which was far more lingering, discovered many traces of the old Gertrude, especially in the bright, saucy look with which she was regarding his evident bewilderment.

"It is I, Cousin Geoffrey. If you have any doubt about my identity, question me about my dear old home, and I'll give you straight answers, even to the number of ruffles on old Betty's cap. Is Uncle Oliver well?" she asks, hastily, as the thought flashed on her that perhaps her uncle's state of health had something to do with Geoffrey's unexpected arrival.

"Your uncle was well yesterday, when I called to see if he had any message for you. He has taken to the chimney corner this year much earlier than his wont; but his health seems as usual."

"He did not send for me? He did not wish me to come home?" asked Gertrude, quickly.

It was in Geoffrey's heart to say that Mr. Oliver did want her, and to issue a peremptory order that all her trunks should be packed, and she ready to start in the morning train. But—

"Your uncle did not send for you," he said, "Though, if you would like to return home with me, I am commissioned to bring you."

"That will depend upon how long you stay. Mrs. Elliot has engagements made for us a full month deep, and it is the nature of such things to accumulate rather than diminish."

"Oh, Miss Oliver, you couldn't think of leaving town until the season is over. It would be too cruel. You could not be so hard-hearted."

This voice from the sofa brought to Geoffrey's recollection that Gertrude was still standing, and that the stripling had no idea of vacating his place. Mrs. Elliot had disappeared. Geoffrey moved a little away from Gertrude, confounding the youth's impudence—on what grounds, it is difficult to say, since he ought not to have thought it reprehensible to like a comfortable corner of the sofa and Gertrude to talk with, that being the very position which just then Geoffrey himself coveted.

From where Geoffrey stood, he could watch Gertrude's profile, and overhear snatches of conversation. He was not very much edified. He heard some reminiscences of waltzes, a spirited discussion upon the merits of kid gloves—introduced by a tear in Gertrude's—and much more of the same inanity; at least such Geoffrey considered it, being a man deficient in small talk, and as disdainful of all carpet-knights as was Goliath of the ruddy-countenanced David; the more so, perhaps, because he was not sure that just such striplings are not often conquerors.

If Geoffrey's disdain was for the boy, his anger was for Gertrude. What right had she to laugh low and sweetly at such poor efforts at wit? or to look up suddenly with her earnest eyes, as if she believed what he was saying?

"They have no doubt improved her manners," soliloquized Geoffrey—"and made her charming according to Mrs. Elliot's ideas. I would rather hear her old brusque words of annoyance at a compliment, than see her apparent enjoyment of such nonsense."

Perhaps he was hardly a fair judge of a conversation of which he could only hear snatches, having chosen to shut himself out by moving just far enough away to prevent Gertrude's including him in it without showing a pointed determination to do so, which would not have pleased him more than this leaving him to himself.

There was this advantage in the latter: that he need not be shut too closely in the midst of a scene which was distasteful to him. "The mind is its own place," and while he stood there with his arms on the mantel, and his grave gaze passing superior over one or two pretty heads inter-

vening between him and Gertrude, he was free to go back to a certain garden-seat under an old oak, with the moonlight peering down among the leaves, into an upturned face—

"Are you taking astronomical observations?" he says, sitting down on the bench, and trying to peer also into the face. (It is all so present to him now, this quiet moonlight scene out of the past: more present, and clearer, than the gaslight glare, and the hum of voices actually about him.)

He sees in this vision of his, the girl's face wet with tears, as with a hand on the brown head, he turns it gently towards himself; and he hears the childish, quivering lips say:

"Do you see anything wrong with Uncle Oliver, Cousin Geoffrey? There cannot be the slightest reason why he should not live for years. He is hale and strong, even for a much younger man," the girl asserts, as if Geoffrey had said something to the contrary.

"Has he been talking of his death?"

"Yes; it was during the storm. It was high enough to make one think of terrible things. I know I have been ungrateful and very wicked often; but do you think God would care to punish me in that way? There is one thing," she adds, as if in triumph. "The punishment would soon be over. I would not live long after him; the very loneliness would kill me."

This time she does not hide her tears, except by the childish action of resting her head on her knees, so as to cry comfortably. Geoffrey has to wait until the storm of grief is over, and the sobs come less frequently. Then he says, gently:

"I do not think you have anything to be anxious about. Your uncle is as usual. But you are not the only one who is often lonely, and who is afraid of the future. Strong man as I am, I dread it very often, Gertrude."

"You ought to ride over here whenever you feel so," Gertrude answers, lifting her head to give him a soft compassionate glance. "Uncle Oliver and I would do our best to cheer you."

"What do you think of Cousin Oliver's advising me to get married?" asks Geoffrey, watching her furtively, as he makes the announcement.

"That would be charming, if you brought a really nice wife home," replies Gertrude, in cheerful approval of her uncle's wise advice.

"She is, I am afraid, too good for me. A true-hearted, honest little girl, whom I am sure I can trust in implicitly—"

And at that, Geoffrey awoke with a start out of this dream of the past. It was a low, silvery peal of laughter from Gertrude which aroused him. He came back to the present, and saw her glancing up brightly at the man beside her. How the child was changed! After all, had it been wise to send her away here, against her will, that she might learn a little of the world and its smooth ways? It was as if that which they had

though a dew-drop, clear and bright enough to reflect what might gather round it, had proved to be a diamond, polished into a new shape, flashing with a new lustre.

Dew-drops may glimmer prettily enough on green leaves in the moonlight, but there is no especial demand for them in the city. With diamonds, however, it is different.

Geoffrey was making no such comparisons; but he did feel that what he had thought it safe to leave here for months unclaimed, was in danger of being coveted by all the room. If he had only held her safe by the public knowledge of their engagement; but Mr. Oliver had wished that to rest a secret during her absence from home, and for that reason Geoffrey had remained away from her. And now, after patiently sustaining her protracted absence all these months, Geoffrey was retracted at the first glimpse of her. If he could only take her with him to-morrow! The less she wished to go, the more he would be inclined to carry her off.

Perhaps he did not look very well pleased as he stood there. Mrs. Elliot observed that he was alone, and she was making her way toward him, in spite of drawbacks in the shape of friends who were leaving early. Geoffrey determined to excuse himself from introductions, and to bid his hostess good-night. Better give up any attempt to talk with Gertrude now, and make another effort to-morrow.

Just then, some one strack a note on the piano, and there came a warning "hush!" from several of the bystanders, quickly followed by the voice of the singer. Geoffrey considered himself an excellent judge of music, and this voice was the best he had ever heard in a drawing-room. It was worth staying a little longer to listen.

He was anxious to see the singer, and advanced toward Mrs. Elliot, who was standing not far from the piano. She saw his desire, and nodded to him encouragingly, moving at the same time to give him a view of an exceedingly fair girl, with hazel eyes, and a plump, prettily rounded figure. He even noticed that her dress was of lavender silk, and that there was a lavish display of ribands.

She was singing again, before Geoffrey, who was quite curious to know who was the owner of so exquisite a voice, had an opportunity of turning to Mrs. Elliot and asking her name. Before he could put the question, the fair songstress was close beside him, followed by two or three men who were petitioning for another song.

"Aunt Margaret shall decide," the girl was saying, good humoredly. "Would not a third be a bore to every one?" she asked Mrs. Elliot.

"I must be consistent," answered Mrs. Elliot, smiling at the petitioners. "I have always maintained that too much music is as bad as none at all. Besides"—she added, to the girl—"I have a friend I wish to introduce to you."

"If it is Gertrude's cousin, you need not. Of course we know all about each other, from Gertrude."

Geoffrey took the hand extended to him as frankly as if they were old friends. He had no doubt he was shaking hands with the Charlotte of whom he had heard his hostess speak; but if he had depended upon any information from Gertrude as to her identity, he would have been altogether at a loss. Mrs. Elliot did not seem to think any more formal introduction needed, but moved away, after telling her niece to amuse Mr. Forbes until Gertrude should be at liberty to talk to him.

"That is a formidable bit of work, which Aunt Margaret has so coolly given me. How in the world can I tell what will amuse you? Men have such very different tastes. Some dearly love nonsense, others like to be listened to as oracles of wisdom. If I but knew your peculiar style—" she said, looking at him naïvely.

"If you would only sing for me, I would like nothing better," replied Geoffrey, not caring to give a description of his tastes and peculiarities.

"Do you really like music? Very few people do. It annoys them to keep silence."

"I cannot say I like every one's singing. I certainly do yours."

"Come here to-morrow morning, then. You must be early, before there is any chance of visitors; and I promise to sing to you as long as you desire."

"I was thinking of returning home to-morrow," began Geoffrey.

"Then do not think of it any longer. It must be dreadfully stupid in the country at this season. Besides, I would feel decidedly slighted, if, after my injudicious promise, you did not stay to hear me sing."

"Your promise ought to influence me all the more, that I dispute its being injudicious."

"Yet, it will not influence you in the least," she said, shaking her head. "Seeing Gertrude will. Don't you think she has grown much more beautiful, since she has been with Aunt Margaret?" she asked, glancing toward Gertrude, and turning to him with such frank admiration as a child might have shown.

Geoffrey too glanced over where Gertrude sat. The stripling had taken himself away, and his place on the sofa was filled by an elderly, pompous-looking man, who certainly was not talking on light subjects, but was discoursing interestedly, if not interestingly. Gertrude was giving him the whole of her attention; her eyes never once wandered to where Geoffrey stood with his new acquaintance.

"She is very beautiful," Geoffrey said in his heart, but he said, audibly—"Who is it Gertrude is talking to?"

"The most tiresome man in the whole world;

one whose idea of conversation is, to give you a lecture as long as a sermon on some subject you know nothing about, and intend to never hear mentioned again. Aunt Margaret says that is the reason Gertrude is such a favorite, she is so good a listener. Every one is fond of her."

"Because she talks, or rather listens, to dull people? Is dullness such a universal failing?" asked Geoffrey, much amused.

"It is a little more common than it ought to be, seeing we call ourselves civilized; and it is owing to girls like Gertrude, that the infection spreads. Now, when I think a person slightly stupid, I run away."

"Do not just now, please, but wait and tell me the name of my cousin's friend."

"I have no intention of leaving. That would be disobeying Aunt Margaret."

"And on the contrary, you are fulfilling her commands to the letter."

"Because I talk to you of Gertrude. I quite understand. It was the gentleman's name you asked? Pshaw, I have no patience with him! Just see how interested Gertrude looks, and how she nods and smiles to him. I tell her she is awfully deceitful."

"Which, of course, she denies."

"Yes. She contends that if any one takes the trouble to talk to her, she is bound to listen. But then, she need not look interested when she must be bored."

Certainly Gertrude was not looking bored just then, and Geoffrey might have been under the impression that she was particularly fortunate in her companions that evening, if he had not overheard the nonentities of the one, and had such excellent testimony as to the dullness of the other. Could this be his honest little Gertrude, whose frankness he used to term bluntness?

"The truth is—" Charlotte was saying, confidentially—"I am Gertrude's opposite in everything. I am always hearing what some one across the room is saying, rather than giving my attention to what is said to me. Aunt Margaret is perpetually scolding me, and advising me to imitate Gertrude. But isn't it very difficult to be good and mind only one's own business?" she asked, lifting her clear hazel eyes to him appealingly.

"So difficult," says Geoffrey, smiling, "that tradition records but one man, who made his fortune by the process. Our neighbors' affairs are generally much more interesting than our own. I doubt if Gertrude is quite proof against the attraction. You must find something else to prove your dissimilarity."

"You must see that we are very unlike in appearance, and that Gertrude has far more taste than I. Does she not arrange her hair charmingly?"

"She always had a quantity of that article," Geoffrey said, with much secret satisfaction. It

is perhaps a spice of the devil which leads a man to admire beautiful hair—at least it is said that his majesty has, from Lilith's day down; had a particular fancy for women with long, abundant tresses.

"How stupid you men are?" Charlotte exclaimed, with a laugh. "You don't suppose nature is so liberal; or if she were, that one would take the trouble to get up such a coiffure with one's own hair."

Geoffrey glanced over at Gertrude's small, shapely head, with its golden-brown plaits, but this time, without any admiration; and then back to the blonde head quite near him. "I suppose you are all alike, and do not consider such deception unworthy of you."

"What one is perfectly willing to acknowledge, you surely do not consider a deception?" said Charlotte, astonished. "If Gertrude would not hesitate to confess her braids, I am sure I need not for her."

"Of course you are willing to make your own confession, then."

"Oh, my hair is difficult to match, unfortunately," said Charlotte good-humoredly, smoothing her plaits gently with her hand as she spoke.

Had any one overheard this conversation, it would have been considered not at all more brilliant than the one Geoffrey was so hard on, when he played eavesdropper. Yet he looked as much amused by Charlotte's speeches, as ever Gertrude by the stripling's.

"Mr. Cranstone is saying good-night to Gertrude. If you are quick, you can secure his place. Pray do not heed me," she added, good-humoredly. "There are hosts of people in the room to whom I should be speaking, instead of talking so long to you. Only, you know, Aunt Margaret bade me. Good-bye. Don't forget to-morrow, and come early, or you will not hear me sing."

Though left alone, Geoffrey made no motion to take the empty seat by Gertrude. He did not even glance that way, but half absently after Charlotte, until his careless observation of her was suddenly quickened into interest.

For was that the girl who had been chattering to him with all a girl's light-heartedness, and half a child's appealing ways, of frank, soft upward looks, and eager little rush of words? That chilly, calm young lady?

Some magician must have wrought that change. Involuntarily, Geoffrey glanced round in search of him, and found him just entering the room.

Charlotte certainly appeared unapproachable enough, but the man was approaching her, nevertheless, with an eager look in his pleasant blue eyes, and both hands outstretched.

One of them fell to his side before he reached her, and he said, a little damped by her blank face:

"Miss Charlotte, how glad I am to see you at last! I have called two or three times since I heard you had returned to town, but began to fear I was fated never to find you at home—"

His sentence broke off, for the puzzled little line on the girl's smooth brow, and the surprise with which she managed to fill those clear hazel eyes of hers. And then she permitted herself to recognize him slowly, and to shake hands with him, though without effusion.

"Mr. Austin, isn't it? You must forgive me, but it is so long since we have met. Let me see: years, isn't it? And you are just from Little Medlington?"

"I saw you when you were at home at the time of Miss Delphine's wedding, last spring. I came to Baltimore soon after, and have been here in business ever since—" returned Ambrose, evidently piqued.

"Ah, how forgetful I am," she said airily. "No doubt one of my home letters may have mentioned it. But I am so seldom at Little Medlington, that they do not give me much of the town news. And you like the change to Baltimore?" she went on, more graciously, now that she had put him safely at a distance. "Probably you have many friends here, since you have not had time to find us out until now."

Poor Ambrose, who had been looking forward to this meeting with Kate's sister, caught at the straw of a hope that the coolness of her reception might have been caused by his fancied neglect. He hastened to explain that he had called, not only immediately upon his arrival, just before her leaving town for the summer, but also several times since her return in the fall. The fates had certainly been against him. He went out very little in Baltimore indeed, had hardly paid a visit, until Miss Bessie came last week.

"Miss Bessie?"

Had he known how full of that name all her letters from home had been during the past months, he would not have wondered at the lack of curiosity with which Charlotte repeated it now. But Ambrose took it up eagerly:

"Miss Bessie Archer. You must have heard of the miracles wrought by one of the legion of new doctors in our village? It is really Kate's miracle," he went on, with a flush of pleasure at the opportunity of mentioning that name, and never observing that it had the effect of a charm to freeze his hearer into a snow-maiden again. "It was Kate and Miss Alethea together, who at last persuaded Miss Bessie to see Dr. Kearney. And he has just sent her here for change of air and scene, having done wonders for her; you would be amazed to see Miss Bessie walk across the room to meet you. She does it as a little child might, making you long to put out a hand to steady her; it is pretty and touching to see."

"I shall certainly try if the sight has that

effect on me. She is staying at the Leslie's, I suppose, on Cathedral Street?" inquired Charlotte, in the most dead-level of matter-of-fact tones.

"Is it possible you had not heard?"

"You forget, Mr. Austin—" replied Miss Burnley, with a softness of manner about as warming as being caught in a yielding snow-drift—"my long separation from Little Medlington has made me unfortunately almost a stranger to home friends and home events. It is a lamentable fact, which my sisters have, however, long since accepted, contenting themselves with having most of my warm interest in Little Medlington concentrated in themselves."

How Ambrose bade good-night, and made his way out of the house, after that soft buffet, he hardly knew. He was certainly very hot about the ears, in spite of the chilly atmosphere out of which he escaped into the kindly frost of the night air. It was some little consolation to him, as he walked down the street, to reflect in what a ridiculous light he might have placed the girl to herself, if he had only thought a moment sooner of recalling to her an Irish story, well-worn as a rebuke of airs and graces, when they were children together, playing in the old Burnley rose-garden. He went on, repeating it now to himself—the return of the traveled young Irishman under the lonely roof, and—

"Mother, what is that long-tailed, black, green-eyed hummer under the table yonder?"

"Och, James, me darlint, don't ye know the cat?"

Ambrose laughed outright, rather bitterly, as he walked on. He would not have an opportunity of reviving Charlotte's remembrance of the story, for he would not see her again; but the account of Charlotte's airs would amuse Miss Bessie.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

[Written expressly for Godey's Lady's Book.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ,

Authors of "Ingremisco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh me, oh me, what frugal cheer
My love doth feed upon—
A touch, a ray that is not here,
A shadow that is gone."

Geoffrey was thinking much more of meeting Gertrude, than of hearing Charlotte sing, when he went to Mrs. Elliot's the next day. The changes in his cousin, which at first caused him to find fault with her, pleased him when he recalled them. Certainly she was much more beautiful than he ever thought she promised to be, and her quiet, very tranquil manner, was what he liked best in a woman. He had chafed under her seeming coolness, but if he chose to select an evening gathering for their meeting, he could not expect a display of affection.

Charlotte was at the piano, trying some new music, when Geoffrey was announced. She had been singing snatches of songs, and insisting on Gertrude's opinion of them. Not that she thought it very valuable, for Gertrude was not a competent judge at the best of times, and just then was giving her whole attention to a decidedly lazy-looking man, who was lounging on the sofa by her, and speaking in a low tone, while he idly turned over the contents of her work-basket.

"I wish you and Cyril would talk in something louder than a whisper. Such a mere buzz is so tormenting," remarked Charlotte, pettishly, as she rustled over the leaves of some music in search of a song.

"That is because you are trying to do two

things at the same time—listening, as well as singing. Since our whispering was rather in compliment to you, however, I don't mind trying my powers of persuasion upon Gertrude in a louder key."

"They will have no more effect," Gertrude said, smiling.

"What do you wish Gertrude to do?" asked Charlotte.

"To go out driving with me. She confesses to a slight headache, and my horses are at the door. I am convinced that a drive will be of benefit to her."

"Of course Gertrude cannot go when she is expecting her cousin—" began Charlotte.

"I thought he was coming to hear you sing," interrupted Cyril.

"But that is no reason why Gertrude should be out of the way."

"Nor any reason why she should be in the way, that I can see. Her headache ought to be excuse enough for a reasonable man."

"But then so few of you are reasonable," said Gertrude. "Keeping quiet within doors will do more to cure my headache, than a drive."

Then it was, that Geoffrey was announced. His quick glance detected at once that his cousin and her companion on the sofa were on easy, intimate terms, and that the man was aware, as well as Geoffrey himself, of how fair the girl looked in the full sunshine slanting in through the window, on the bent golden-brown head. The delicate, varying face was quite flushed and bright with pleasure, as it turned at the opening of the door. She rose when she saw Geoffrey, and by her hasty movement scattered various dainty little trinkets which belonged to her basket, and which she had rescued from Cyril Elliot's fingers.

"Shall I ring for some one to pick up your treasures? They have rolled away most provokingly," Cyril said, not offering to undertake the task himself.

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Gertrude did not hear. She was shaking hands with Geoffrey, and wondering what had happened to make him look so grave. There was no opportunity to ask, so she introduced him to Mr. Elliot, who rose to his feet for the formal handshaking. But he evidently did not intend to be ousted from his comfortable corner beside Gertrude; for he resumed, it as soon as the introduction was over.

That he was a kinsman of the late Mr. Elliot, Geoffrey had no doubt, though he did not remember hearing of him before. The idea that he had a perfect right to lounge there when he pleased, was not a very pleasant one to Geoffrey just then.

"Do, Cyril, come and help me with this music-book," Charlotte called out. She had been quite overlooked whilst the two men were being made known to each other.

"No, I thank you, I never touch a lady's music"—Cyril replied. "I prefer paying for my songs at the opera. It is too hard work to stand turning over leaves, for even the very best of songs to repay one."

"You are not lazy to be civil," retorted Charlotte. But Geoffrey had gone forward, and taken the ponderous music-book from her.

"Oh thank you," she said, rewarding him with a friendly smile out of her pretty eyes. "You shall have your favorite now, if you tell me what it is."

There followed a lengthy discussion upon the merit of ballads, Geoffrey arguing that the simplest music is the most effective. Charlotte was not open at once to conviction, and tried alternately an opera air and a ballad. Gertrude and Cyril did not enter into this discussion; indeed, they seemed fully engrossed with each other.

Geoffrey would have enjoyed Charlotte's sayings, if Gertrude had been less occupied. He might have been oblivious of his cousin's presence as his back was turned to her, if there had not been a mirror in view of the piano, which reflected the sofa and its occupants.

Geoffrey could see that at first Cyril was doing most of the talking, but every now and then Gertrude interrupted him, and held out her hand for some article needed from her work-basket, of which Cyril had again possessed himself. By this means there was a little pantomime, which Geoffrey did not enjoy; the less so, because he presently discovered that Charlotte was watching the by-play by the same means. Unfortunately neither Geoffrey nor Charlotte could catch a word of the conversation.

"Who is this cousin Geoffrey?" Cyril was asking now. "Is he a near kinsman, or is the title only a convenient cover for an intimacy?"

"He is a very far-off cousin. He lives on the next place to us, and I not only see him every day when I am at home, but I have known him all my life."

"Has anything happened to roughen his path in life? A disappointment in love, or something of the sort?"

"Nothing of the kind," she said, glancing up in some surprise. "I fancy his path has been smoother than most men's; at least, he has always been able to choose it for himself."

"And it lies across a meadow or two, I suppose, to your door."

"Yes, of late years when he grew tired of wandering farther afield—for Cousin Geoffrey has seen a good deal of life, and has traveled too. My scissors, please. What made you ask such a question?" she asked, going back abruptly.

"I judged from his face. He does not look particularly well-pleased with himself or the rest of the world. Confess, is not this cousin of yours somewhat given to lecturing you?"

"Not more than I deserve."

"What a lucky dog he is, to be able to say all kinds of disagreeable things which you take with sweet Griselda meekness. Whereas, if I should delicately object to the color of your riband, you would resent it at once."

"But you have no right to object to my riband."

"Has this far-away cousin any more right?"

Gertrude blushed crimson: a blush which Geoffrey caught in the mirror. "Of course he has. Didn't I tell you I had known him ever since I was a child? Besides, he is nearly twice as old as I am."

"I envy him his thirty-six years or thereabouts, for their privileges," said Cyril, laughing.

"It is not his age," said Gertrude, impetuously throwing down her work and clasping her hands in her lap. "You see our home is rather lonely. No one lives there but Uncle Oliver and me; and though Uncle Oliver is the most agreeable man I ever met, still we are dull at times, and—"

"I don't often bestow pity on an unknown individual," interrupted Cyril. "but I must say, Gertrude, I pity your future husband, if he should chance to be a little dull. If the most agreeable man you know bores you at times, what will an ordinary one do?"

"I did not say Uncle Oliver bored me; only that at times we are dull. If I am as unfortunate as you predict, I can only hope my future husband will be too polite to show his feelings."

"Don't choose your cousin then, for he will be sure to show what he feels."

Gertrude blushed again.

"Why won't you listen? I am going to give you a history of my life, and in it is included a confession."

"Don't make it," said Cyril, quickly, and then he added, without turning his head, or moving a muscle of his face: "Are you trying, Charlotte, whether Mr. Forbes has a correct ear, that you sing out of tune?"

Cyril was looking Charlotte full in the eyes as he spoke, through the medium of the mirror.

"I was wondering why Gertrude had put down her work, knowing that she is anxious to finish it, so I lost my place. I did not know you were listening to me," Charlotte explained, carelessly.

Geoffrey had seen Cyril catch Charlotte's eye in the mirror, and had turned away. As he did so, he felt something crunch under his heel; and stooping, he picked up a bit of filigree gold, crushed quite flat.

"I have done some mischief, I fear," he said, handing the shapeless bit to Charlotte.

"I am afraid you have. Gertrude will be sorry. See, Gertrude—" Charlotte turned round on the music-stool, holding up the wreck—"See what has happened to your vinaigrette."

"Oh, I am so sorry!" Gertrude exclaimed, turning to Cyril.

"What was it? What is a vinaigrette?" Geoffrey asked Charlotte.

"This one was a miniature lantern of filigree gold, set with pearls," explained Charlotte. "It was a mere pretty toy, not of the smallest use; but Cyril gave it to Gertrude on her birthday, and no doubt she valued it for that reason."

"I am sorry to have done so much mischief," said Geoffrey, stiffly, going to Gertrude, and giving the shapeless ornament into her hands. "I had no idea there was anything under my foot."

"Of course not. It was Cyril's fault. He should have picked up my treasures when I dropped them."

"Which means, I must do so now," returned Cyril, rising and making a lazy search for the missing trinkets.

"Here is a button under the piano, Cyril," Charlotte called out.

"Gertrude has a soul above buttons, and can forego that one. Charlotte, sing something cheerful. No love songs, I beg," Cyril added, coming to the piano.

"It appears to me, you and Mr. Elliot are rather intimate," Geoffrey said, as he took Cyril's place on the sofa.

"Of course we are intimate. We have been constantly together for nearly a year."

"May I ask who he is?"

"If you are really ignorant on the subject, you may," said Gertrude, gravely. "Cyril is Mrs. Elliot's nephew, or to be perfectly correct, her husband's nephew. He is a great favorite with his aunt, and is constantly here."

"It is strange you never mentioned him in your letters, if, as you say, you see so much of him."

"I have no doubt I have mentioned him often, but the name has made no impression upon you."

"Mr. Elliot might not have done so, but Cyril most certainly would," Geoffrey said emphatically.

"It was an odd name," was the careless rejoinder. "I don't know anything more stupid

than filling one's letters with the sayings and doings of those who are strangers to one's correspondents. But hereafter I will give you minute descriptions of all my acquaintances, and then you will see if my letters are more worth reading."

"Acquaintances!" repeated Geoffrey. "Do you receive such a present as this"—touching the crushed vinaigrette—"from mere acquaintances?"

"It was not so very much to receive," said Gertrude, quickly. "Only a pretty toy for my work-basket."

"Toys can be made expensive as well as useless. These pearls you set no value on are far from worthless."

"Are they?" she asked, thoughtfully. "The truth is, I know very little about such things, and Cyril gives his gifts in such a careless fashion, one scarcely feels as if one were receiving."

"Pray use Mr. Elliot's patronymic rather than his Christian name. It may be a late city fashion, but I confess it is startling to an unaccustomed ear. If you were your friend's godmother, you might have the privilege."

Gertrude was silent, and bent her head over her work.

"The truth is, Gertrude," said Geoffrey, having tried in vain to see in her face whether he had gone too far in his censure. "I find you such a complete woman of the world, that the metamorphosis is startling, and—"

"There is just your mistake," interrupted Gertrude. "Charlotte is constantly laughing at me for my simplicity and want of knowledge of the world."

"Do you mean to say you do not enjoy worldly things?" asked Geoffrey.

"I enjoy them intensely. I rather think it is my nature to enjoy everything inordinately."

"Even that young fool's twaddle last night, and the old one's inanities?"

"Both," Gertrude replied. "Mr. Tremaine, if you mean him as the young fool, dances well and does his best to be entertaining. I do not think it is my place to listen to him in moody silence or to turn my back on him because he chooses to talk a half hour with me. As for Mr. Cranstone's inanities, I find no difficulty in being interested in them. He has been too kind to me for—"

"Oh, every one seems to have been too kind to you. Only a certain Mr. Elliot has been kindest."

"You are right," replied Gertrude, calmly. "If you knew how forlorn and frightened I was when you left me here, how I disliked going out and shrank away from strangers, you would comprehend how I must appreciate Cyr—Mr. Elliot's kindness to me. It must have been a little wearisome to dance continually with a shy, awkward girl, to try to make her feel at ease, and this Cyril always did, going out many a time when he would not have done so if I had not looked beseechingly at

As for the city fashion of Christian names—you may not know that the Elliots have some slight connection with our branch of the Olivers, and I was glad enough, shrinking among strangers, to have some one advance a claim to drop the unfamiliar 'Miss Oliver.' You are right; a certain Mr. Elliot *has* been kindest, and if any one is to have any credit for the improvement you sent me away for, surely it is he."

"He found you an apt scholar."

"And a grateful one. For after the first month or six weeks, which I will confess were trying, I have enjoyed every moment of the time I have been here."

"Very flattering to me," said Geoffrey, his brow darkening. "I take it for granted you will be glad if I can give the same experience of this last year."

"No doubt the days have slipped by with you very comfortably," returned Gertrude, smiling. "It would be ungrateful in me not to acknowledge all that has been done for me. Every day there has been something to enjoy. And besides, I have seen so much that was entirely new to me."

"What will you do at home, after all this pleasure seeking and excitement, Gertrude?" asked Geoffrey, uneasily.

"Oh, I shall have the memory of it all, and so live over my halcyon days. They are never lost to one, any more than a good action is said to be."

This was not quite the answer Geoffrey looked for. He had no part nor parcel in these days Gertrude intended to treasure in her memory; though he was supposed to have a large share in her life. That Cyril Elliot had, she had acknowledged, unwittingly perhaps; and Geoffrey was angry at the thought. He used not to be irascible; on the contrary, he had always been rather benignant to the child—but then she was a mere child, not this woman who slightly baffled him.

Cinderella amid the cinders, watching her fine sisters dressing, without an idea that she could be charming, and Cinderella bedecked in satin and lace, were quite different persons—so different, that it is difficult for some natures not to think the glass slipper business an artful device to get a king's son for a husband, rather than an accident turned to good account by her match-making godmother.

Geoffrey had no opportunity to express his disapprobation of retrospection, for Mrs. Elliot came into the room just then. She had her hat on, and had evidently been out of doors.

"Why have you young people not been out?" she asked, after shaking hands with Geoffrey. "The day is charming, and I saw every one in the street."

"You are not literal, Aunt Margaret. There were at least four, I can testify, whom you did not meet."

"Ah, Cyril," she said, turning round on him,

"why in the world don't you send away your carriage when you spend the morning here? If you have nothing to do, you need not publish it at my door."

"I expected to have my hands full of business when I came here this morning. My object was to persuade Gertrude to drive with me, but she was obstinate, and would not go."

"If Gertrude could not, why did not you go instead, Charlotte? You know I always approve of spending part of the morning in the fresh air. Exercise preserves the complexion," added Mrs. Elliot, dogmatically.

"Unlike Gertrude, I was not asked to drive, much less persuaded. You need not excuse yourself," she added, turning to Cyril, who it must be confessed did not not seem inclined to apologize, "for you know very well that I was engaged to sing for Mr. Forbes."

"Which you did charmingly," said Cyril, ironically.

"I am glad you enjoyed it," replied Charlotte, laughing, and coloring a little, "though perhaps Gertrude may think you might have been better employed than in listening to me while she was talking to you."

"Gertrude, I venture to say, is not thinking of either of us," said Cyril, glancing over at the sofa where Gertrude still sat, evidently engrossed so deeply in her own thoughts, that she was unconscious of what was passing around her. "But I must not keep my horses at Aunt Margaret's door, after her lecture. Will you not let me drive you to the park? We have a couple of hours before dinner," added Cyril, turning to Geoffrey.

"Yes, and bring Mr. Forbes to dinner *en famille*. I shall need you both to-night, so I had best secure you," said Mrs. Elliot.

Geoffrey glanced at Gertrude, to see if she were pleased by Mrs. Elliot's invitation, but she was occupied with putting her possessions into her work-basket, and never looked up. She left the room soon after the two men, so did not hear Charlotte's commendation of Geoffrey, which being so flattering, Mrs. Elliot came to the conclusion that it would be as well to make her house pleasant to Gertrude's cousin, during his stay in town.

CHAPTER VII.

—"She is of those
Who steal the keys from snoring Destiny."

Geoffrey ate many more dinners *en famille* at Mrs. Elliot's. Had he become fascinated by the gay May-fair life? or was it that he would not return home without Gertrude, who was still strongly inclined to see the season out, and whom Mrs.

Elliot abated by putting as many obstacles as possible in the way of her leaving—pleasant obstacles, which she did not desire to surmount. Geoffrey could not carry her off, will she, nill she, as he might, had Mr. Oliver given him full authority as his minister plenipotentiary. So the short winter days fled by, at last no more heeded by Geoffrey than by Gertrude. If Mr. Oliver found them drag, as he sat down among his books at his lonely fireside, he made no complaint.

The old adage, that when the days begin to lengthen the cold begins to strengthen, did not hold good that year. The sun put forth his power as his daily course grew longer, and the bright weather brought forth crowds of idlers, amongst whom were Gertrude and Charlotte; for Mrs. Elliot was not only a firm believer in the general efficacy of fresh air, but she also held to the policy of keeping her goods in the shop-windows—that is, in sight.

On one of the pleasantest days of all that pleasant winter, Gertrude stood before her mirror putting on her hat. She was in no haste, and not at all annoyed by a tap at her door, which might betoken some detention. Evidently the knock was a mere form, for before she had time to answer it, Charlotte had opened the door and had come into the room.

"So you are going out. I wish I had the energy to dress and go with you. It requires so much exertion to get ready—" and Charlotte dropped into the most comfortable chair in the room, yawning audibly.

"You ought to have been brought up in the country, and then you would find exercise a necessity."

"Do you mean to say you walk in the country?" asked Charlotte, with interest.

"Walk or ride. You can ride instead, if you prefer it, when you are at Uncle Oliver's this spring. Why should we not walk in the country?"

"I should think the question would be why should you? When there is but little to see and the certainty of not meeting any one, what object can you have?"

"Fresh air," said Gertrude, laconically.

"That sounds like Aunt Margaret or Mr. Forbes. Gertrude, Mr. Forbes is a near neighbor of yours at Broomielaw?"

"Yes, quite near. Only three miles from us."

"Three miles! Why that is immense! I thought he told me he saw you every day?" questioned Charlotte, evidently disappointed.

"So he does, and two or three times a day if he chooses. We do not count a mile any distance."

"Then I suppose, when Cyril comes down, we can manage a game of croquet and so have the fresh air without the walking."

"I did not know Cyril intended coming down. Since you suggest it, I will certainly ask him;

though I haven't the slightest idea he will come."

"Oh, I did not mean to suggest. Only you see, Cyril always goes where Aunt Margaret does."

"I never noticed he was Mrs. Elliot's shadow," said Gertrude, dryly.

"Every one looks upon him as part of the family, and Aunt Margaret might think it odd if you left him out. If you don't mind it, Gertrude, I'll urge Cyril to go with us. He is used to doing what I ask him. You know we are next-door to cousins."

"So near as next-door?" exclaimed Gertrude, laughing. "You will need a dispensation to make one house of it. But by all means use your influence in the cause of croquet."

"One house of it, Gertrude? What in the world can you mean?"

"Only —" said Gertrude bluntly, just glancing at the innocent, wondering face upturned to her, — "that there needs no very keen observer to see that Mrs. Elliot is bent upon making a match between you."

"What nonsense! Aunt Elliot cannot force me to marry any one."

This seemed unanswerable. Gertrude had nothing to say to it.

"I hope you are not like some people, Gertrude" — pursued Charlotte, after a pause. "Women generally understand, though men are slow to believe in platonic affection—because there are so few of them capable of feeling it, perhaps. Your cousin, for instance; it is easy to see your intimacy with Cyril mars his peace of mind. It is well he is not your guardian, for if you had to gain his consent, you would stand a chance of braiding St. Catherine's tresses—" watching Gertrude give a pat to her own bronze braids to press them into shape.

"Nevertheless, though Cousin Geoffrey is not my guardian, I don't intend to marry unless I have his consent," replied Gertrude, quite coolly.

"You must have wonderful faith in his judgment."

"On the contrary, I think him very easily prejudiced."

"Do you mean to say, Gertrude," exclaimed Charlotte, sitting upright in her chair, and looking intently at Gertrude, who was calmly putting on her hat—"do you mean to tell me you intend to marry to please your cousin?"

"Not exactly," replied Gertrude, slowly, being employed in straightening her hat, which was of more importance just then than Charlotte's question, "My intention will be to please myself, but I will not marry to displease my cousin."

"Then it is well you and Cyril have not fancied each other," said Charlotte, quickly.

"It is well we have not, for a better reason than Cousin Geoffrey's possible objection."

"A better reason?" repeated Charlotte, with a vain effort to appear indifferent.

"Mrs. Elliot."

"I am sure Aunt Margaret is very fond of you, Gertrude," said Charlotte, reproachfully. "And her wishes, granting that she has such—which mind, I do not—need have no effect upon you," Charlotte rather asked than asserted.

"There you are wrong. I have been brought up with quite Oriental ideas of hospitality. As Mrs. Elliot's guest I would not presume to do anything I knew to be disagreeable to her whilst under her roof."

"Well, I can only repeat, that with your odd ideas, it is well you don't care for Cyril," said Charlotte.

"I do like him better than almost any one I know," returned Gertrude.

"Oh, you know what I mean."

Gertrude was turning over some gloves, too intent upon selecting a pair to heed Charlotte's last remark.

"I think Cyril cares a great deal for you, Gertrude."

"He has been very kind to me," was the brief answer.

"Only kind. Ah well, so much might lead to more in time," Charlotte said, playfully.

"I shan't hope against hope. But seriously, I don't think Cyril cares to be in love with any one."

"Those are the very men who lose their footing entirely, when they once fall in," said Charlotte, hastily.

"They plunge in suddenly, then, without any premonition of their danger. They don't see their charmer every day."

"Is that a warning or a truism?" asked Charlotte.

"All truisms are warnings—" Gertrude answered indifferently, turning from the subject. And just then there came a knock at the door to help her.

"Mr. Elliott is here, ma'am, and says please not to keep him waiting, for the horses are foolish and won't stand."

"Tell him that I am coming at once," Gertrude replied, catching up the first pair of gloves, though she had been fastidious in selecting the shade a moment before.

"I did not know you were going out with Cyril," remarked Charlotte.

"I don't think you asked me. But I must not keep the horses waiting. Good-bye; I hope you won't regret staying in doors this lovely morning."

For sometime after Gertrude left the room, Charlotte sat in deep thought; at the close of her reverie, she seemed to have regained all her energy, for she rose quickly and began dressing to go out.

Whilst Gertrude and Cyril were taking their drive, Charlotte was walking calmly in the sunshine, as if she had never had a desire to drive behind gay horses, nor to overhear the conversation of those who did.

Charlotte's steps were bent toward the busiest part of the city, uncomfortably near the wharves, and where silk dresses and overskirts were seen so seldom as to be objects of curiosity. It required some dexterity as well as courage for her to thread her way among tobacco hogsheds and huge sugar barrels, whence protruded nails which might have served a strong-minded Jael for her unwomanly deed, but which were to be avoided by a weak-minded girl with a dress worth preserving.

Charlotte kept bravely on her devious way, not to be appalled or turned back by difficulties; until she suddenly came face to face with Geoffrey Forbes—only a flour-barrel between them.

"You here! I thought you had gone somewhere into the country to order clover-seed," was Charlotte's salutation.

"It is here that one seeks for such things. But I did not expect to meet you," said Geoffrey, certainly surprised by the rencounter.

"Of course not. You are quite a lucky four-leaved clover to me, however. I confess to having quite lost my way, and begin to think I ought to have turned out of this place a square or two higher up. Don't be ill-natured, and say I ought not to have come here at all."

"I can't say that, as I do not know your errand. It may be one of benevolence, and you may be perfectly right in coming. Cannot I help you out of your difficulties, and start you on the right road?"

"Yes, my errand is a benevolent one. You will be of great service if you will pilot me back to a familiar part of the town. I don't think I have time to go farther to-day."

"I was going to Mrs. Elliot's—" began Geoffrey.

"Were you? Oh, then I think I had better go home. Aunt Margaret is out, but perhaps that will not turn you back."

There was not much opportunity for conversation whilst Geoffrey was leading the way out of the labyrinth, and metaphorically was led into a more perplexing one. It was rather a novel sight in the busy, crowded thoroughfare, that of a daintily dressed woman wending her way there; and Geoffrey, who held some of St. Paul's rigid ideas about womanly modesty, was annoyed by the attention Charlotte attracted, and hurried her on. As for Charlotte herself, she was rather more amused than offended, and wondered in her heart why girls did not oftener find a little convenient business near the wharves.

"How disagreeable!" she exclaimed, when they had reached a less bustling street, and she and

Geoffrey could walk together. "How any one can find pleasure in walking in town is beyond my comprehension."

"Perhaps you prefer driving," said Geoffrey, innocently.

"Oh, it is not the walking I object to. It is the din of the drays and carriages, and the continual bowing to acquaintances."

"You would like a country walk, then."

"I will tell you when I have some experience. Perhaps you know Aunt Margaret and I are to pay Mr. Oliver a visit in the spring."

"I am afraid you will find it dull," said Geoffrey, not sure that he was altogether pleased.

"Dull! oh, you men think girls are never happy but when in a crowd. I expect to find the country charming. If the worst comes to the worst, I will take lessons in farming from you."

"And follow the plow with a parasol over your head," said Geoffrey, sardonically.

"Why not be comfortable as well as useful? But I suspect you are laughing at me. I will ask Gertrude when she comes home whether the two are not possible."

"Is Gertrude out?" asked Geoffrey. No doubt if Charlotte had mentioned this fact before, he would not have volunteered to walk all the way home with her.

"Yes; did I not mention that she was driving with Cyril? She is much more venturesome than I, for I never drive behind his handsome grays if I can help doing so. Cyril had to hurry Gertrude off without the slightest ceremony, he was so afraid to keep the creatures standing, as it is sure to fret them."

Geoffrey made no answer, but Charlotte's hasty glance at his face assured her that he had not suddenly become deaf. It was not a pleasant expression which met her eye. Anger is seldom attractive, though poets may give fine descriptions of it.

Certainly Geoffrey's black face was no exception to the rule; and yet Charlotte would not have had it otherwise, though she appeared not to notice it.

There was something else indeed, to claim all her attention a few instants later, and to make her for that space of time actually forgetful of Geoffrey and his wrath, desirable or undesirable.

It was an open carriage, descending that steep slope on one side of the monument, while Charlotte was toiling up the opposite side-walk, with the double street and the monument in the midst, between her and the carriage. Over there as it was, she would probably have passed on without observing it, but that there chanced to be a break in the line of carriages nearer her, and just then one of the horses across the way slipped on the steep declivity, and there was a little grating of hoofs, and a sharp cry of terror, before the driver could recover his control of the animals, and go

on steadily. The man, who had perhaps been holding the reins carelessly, as he bent forward to point out something worth noticing to his companion, was Ambrose Archer; the lady who uttered the cry, turning and catching his arm with that frightened appeal in her dilated eyes, Charlotte had no difficulty in recognizing as Bessie Morris, to whom Charlotte had paid one formal visit weeks ago, on her arrival in B—. And there was something else which Charlotte had no difficulty in recognizing—the look in the two faces turned upon each other.

"Poor Kate!" she said to herself as she walked on; and then brightening again: "But certainly it is best so."

With that she put aside Kate's little affair, and turned herself to the business in hand.

"Mr. Forbes, may I say something to you which is very near my heart?" she asked, after they had walked on silently for about half a square.

"It is about Gertrude—" she went on, looking up at him softly, as with a start he came back to the fact of her presence and Gertrude's absence, and turned on her innocent face eyes which had not time to lose that glow of anger for Gertrude. "You know, Mr. Forbes, we have been thrown together intimately, for nearly a year now, so no wonder we have learned to love each other as sisters do. There is scarcely anything I would not do for Gertrude. I know you men are in the habit of laughing at girl's friendships; but that does not make them worthless."

She waited there for an answer—for permission to prove this pretty sisterly affection.

"What of Gertrude?" asked Geoffrey, quite ignoring the preamble, which perhaps Charlotte had taken the trouble to study during her walk toward the wharves. All that interested him in it, was the fact that there was something to be told him of Gertrude.

"I feel that it is rather a delicate subject to broach, and would not say a word to any one but you, who know Gertrude so well. Of course it is natural she should think every one as frank as herself. If I thought she really understood Cyril I should not feel so uneasy."

"Gertrude may understand him, but I confess I do not."

"He does not mean anything wrong," said Charlotte, apologetically. "He has nothing in the world to do but to amuse himself, and unfortunately Aunt Margaret encourages him to make a lounge of her house. I acknowledge I have very little influence with him."

This last remark sounded rather irrelevant.

"I thought you wished to say something of Gertrude, not of Elliot," said Geoffrey.

"You are so impatient. I shall wish I had said nothing, even though my motive is of the best. Of course Gertrude is constantly thrown with Cyril, and as I seldom drive with him, she

does. And people seeing them continually together, misunderstand and remark upon it."

"And Gertrude wisely thinks it is none of their business."

"I suppose so. But really I don't believe the world is half as ill-natured as it has the credit of being; and if it does say spiteful things it soon forgets them. I am much more afraid of Gertrude's misunderstanding Cyril, and thinking he may mean more than he really does. Of course you are the best judge whether the constant devotion of a man like Cyril is dangerous or not to any girl."

"You evidently suppose Elliot in no danger, as your anxiety is all for Gertrude."

"He is in imminent danger of being spoiled. Do you believe in matches made up by friends?"

"They are said to be a risk," answered Geoffrey, wondering how much she knew of his engagement with Gertrude, her question making him suspicious.

"I fear they are worse than a risk; and I sometimes think Aunt Margaret anything but wise to set her heart on one I wot of."

"Do you mean that you are engaged to Elliot?" asked Geoffrey, bluntly. "If so, his behavior—"

"Everything is not for the world to know—" interposed Charlotte, with a smile and graceful shrug of the shoulders, and a pretty, pink flush on her face, as Geoffrey looked down upon it. "I was speaking of Gertrude, not of myself. If she were not so difficult to approach, I would have told her, not you, what people are saying. But as you are her cousin, and so much older than she, you can understand—see, there they are."

Geoffrey looked up just as Gertrude saw them, and smiled and bowed to them: Cyril was giving close attention to his horses. When Charlotte and Geoffrey reached Mrs. Elliot's door, he had driven off, and Gertrude was on the steps, waiting for them.

"You are coming in?" she asked, as she held out her hand to Geoffrey.

He was not inclined to go into the house and sit a half hour, if Charlotte were to be one of the party; he was not inclined to indifferent small talk at any time, much less just then. Before he answered, however, Charlotte asked: "Is it late, Gertrude? I am dreadfully tired, and would like to rest before dinner. Mr. Forbes, I know, will excuse me."

And she wisely went upstairs, leaving Gertrude to lead the way to the drawing-room.

Gertrude had seated herself upon a sofa there, speaking lightly to her cousin as she went in, and drawing back her dress to give him the place beside her. But he seemed to prefer standing, leaning his arm on the mantel. Perhaps it was because he could see her better, standing before

her. He must have expected some great effect from his words, so keenly did he watch her face as he said abruptly:

"Gertrude, I am going home to-morrow."

"You have heard no bad news? Nothing to recall you?" she asked, anxiously, struck by a certain self-restraint he was putting upon himself.

"I have had no letters," answered Geoffrey, succinctly.

"Nor telegram?"

"Nor telegram. I have had no tidings of any kind."

"There is nothing at home to make you feel anxious?" questioned Gertrude.

"Nothing."

"A whim, then? I never knew you to act from mere caprice before," said Gertrude, laughing as much from relief as from the idea of such an anomaly.

"Whether whim or not, does not alter the fact," said Geoffrey, shortly.

"Of course not. Only I am sorry you are going. And I do not know what Mrs. Elliot will think of it, as she has made an engagement for to-morrow evening for you. I am afraid you will appear very abrupt."

"How long would you think proper to announce your leaving," asked Geoffrey—"not to be abrupt?"

"If you told Mrs. Elliot to-day, you might leave the day after to-morrow, I should think."

"I can wait so long. Gertrude, I particularly wish you to go home with me."

She looked up, astonished.

"I? I could not think of it—unless, indeed, Uncle Oliver writes for me."

"Not if I urge it?"

Gertrude shook her head.

"Cousin Geoffrey, I just want to pay my visit out. It is only a few weeks longer, which you too can spend here if you please. Or we will compromise: you stay three weeks and I give up three weeks. That is reasonable on my part, and you—"

"You seem wilfully to forget my telling you that I must return at once."

"Then I will follow you in three weeks. I should dislike to appear capricious to Mrs. Elliot, who has been kind beyond anything to me."

"I imagine the kindness, which you are inclined to exaggerate, cost her nothing. She told me herself, it was less trouble to bring out two pretty girls at a time, than one."

"Even that was kind in her to say. It is not every one who makes light of an obligation. It is not that I am unwilling to go home, Cousin Geoffrey, only that I don't care to run away. I want to see Uncle Oliver, and Aunt Betty—"

"I am nobody in the case, it seems."

"Oh yes, you are everybody. But you are here,

and just now I find it difficult to make you see things as you should," said Gertrude, smiling.

"Pretty words never yet distorted a sensible man's vision."

"Those who squint think all others see wrong," retorted Gertrude.

"In this case it is you who are terribly short-sighted. Great heavens, Gertrude how can you be so wilful?" he exclaimed, in his helpless exasperation at her resistance. "I would rather have said nothing more—would rather you should of your own accord go home with me, instead of being driven off by the gossip of the town."

"The gossip of the town? Will you be kind enough to explain what you mean?"

"Only that people say you care for Cyril Elliot, and that he does not reciprocate the kind feeling."

Her face did change then.

"I should think you would be the very last person to repeat such a thing to me," she flashed out. And then she recovered herself with a scornful laugh.

"After all, it is sheer nonsense. People have something else to do, than to manufacture gossip out of nothing. I think I can guess your informant, and can relieve your anxiety by telling you Charlotte does not believe what she repeats to you."

"Nevertheless, I prefer that there should be no ground for remark or wrong construction. Remember, Gertrude, I do not say there is anything but an absurd intimacy between you and Elliot, which will die out as soon as you are separated, no matter what he says to the contrary."

"He never has said anything to the contrary," she interrupted.

"Rather flattering to you."

"One does not care always to be flattered. That is what I like about Cyril. He does not think it necessary to talk nonsense and say pretty things."

"I hope you are not drawing comparisons."

"Hardly, as flattery is not your forte," replied Gertrude, smiling; for was she not over the rapids and sailing in smooth waters again?

"Then you will not be surprised if I speak very plainly. Miss Burnley may have had only a malicious desire to make me feel uncomfortable; or she may have wished to put you on your guard."

"I don't see how she could have expected to gain such an end by speaking to you," objected Gertrude. "Charlotte has no reason to suppose you have more influence than any one else."

"I can't say I have any reason to suppose so, myself. But really, Gertrude, you must see that if such remarks are made—"

She broke in good-humoredly:

"Cousin Geoffrey, what a mountain you are making of Charlotte's diminutive mole-hill! There is no one in town, I venture to say, who

has made any unkind remark of me; and Cyril more than suspects our position to each other."

"Do you mean to say you have told him you are engaged?"

"Not in so many words. That isn't so easily done. But I have hinted so plainly the fact, that I do not see how—how he could fail to understand me."

"Then I must say his conduct is inexcusable. I did think his monopoly of you, when I am present, was in ignorance of my rights; but if, as you say, he knows of our engagement, then he is simply impertinent."

"There is no pleasing you," said Gertrude, putting up her shoulders as if to shield herself from Geoffrey's fault-finding. "If I prove he means nothing by his intentions, you are not pleased; and when Charlotte hints he does, you lecture me. You must excuse me if I laden my donkey my own way, and make my journey through life as comfortably as I can."

"There is a very easy way to please me. You have only to promise to go home with me" replied Geoffrey, eagerly.

"But you must see, I could not possibly do so. Mrs. Elliot will be offended if I have not a shadow of an excuse to give for leaving her house so suddenly; there are friends to whom I must say good-bye, whom I could not possibly see in one day; Uncle Oliver is not expecting me; and Charlotte will think she has driven me off ignominiously. Besides,—"

"Go on. That 'besides' no doubt covers the whole ground."

"Pray let it. Besides, I desire to stay."

He had nothing wherewith to answer that objection, so shifted his ground uneasily to a former one:

"Gertrude, I will take it upon me to make both our excuses to Mrs. Elliot. As to Miss Burnley, you have said yourself that her opinion is worthless. The question is simply whether you will do what I ask you, or not."

"Then I am sorry that I must refuse to do it."

"Gertrude, do you really mean what you say?"

"Certainly."

"And understand the full effect of your decision?"

"I understand that I shall have six weeks more of this pleasant life here."

There was a long moment of silence, during which Gertrude drew off her gloves, and tossed her hat upon the sofa, in the vacant place beside her. She did it absently, with a sense of oppression, and a vague longing to free herself. But Geoffrey's eyes darkened watching her. To him it was a significant action.

Two or three obvious facts were pressing themselves upon him in the silence: that Gertrude was enjoying a stage of life which he disliked; that his opinion and wishes had not the slightest

influence with her; that a man of his years and experience could not possibly be led by a mere girl.

There was a way out of this three-fold difficulty: to let this quarrel break off an engagement of old Mr. Oliver's planning. An easy way, clear enough before some men; and Geoffrey was by no means an over-amiable one. But, though he was angry, he never thought of hinting at such a solution of the difficulty. For Geoffrey Forbes was no longer the lenient, somewhat elderly fiancé, looking out merely for Gertrude's improvement, with a love which, at Mr. Oliver's hint, he had drawn on as easily as he might an old glove, and which, it was to be inferred, he could put off as easily. Gertrude had been a mere girl then, unformed in character as in beauty. A year had ripened her into a woman; a fortnight, Geoffrey into an angry, jealous lover, not willing to acknowledge a rival, much less to succumb to one.

And so he broke the pause by saying coldly:

"If you will tell Mrs. Elliot that I will call sometime to-morrow to say good-bye, I shall be obliged to you."

"I will tell her," Gertrude answered, without raising her eyes; nor did she look at him when he coldly bade her good-morning.

Charlotte met him in the hall as he went out. She asked him to stay to dinner, but received such a curt refusal that she did not press her invitation, nor detain him with any pleasant little badinage, as usual. Indeed, she thought it best to leave Gertrude also to herself, and went upstairs to the privacy of her own room. She was occupied until dinner in mending the ruffle of her dress, which she had torn during her morning's walk. There was an uneasy look on her face as she sat there; she began to fear she had managed to make a far more impracticable rent, which she could never mend, though she might strive earnestly to do so.

But, after all, the rent was patched the next day, when Geoffrey came to say good-bye to Mrs. Elliot. Gertrude had gained the victory yesterday, it is true: but a victory over a foe may be worth the battle; over a friend, it is humiliating.

"Cousin Geoffrey," she said, as he came in that next morning, "Cousin Geoffrey, I am going home with you to-day."

CHAPTER VIII.

"But I have known the lark's song half sound sad,
And I have seen the lake, which rippled sun,
Toss dimmed and purple in a sudden wind;
And let me laugh a moment at my heart
That thinks the summer-time must all be fair,
That thinks the good days always must be good—
Yet let me laugh a moment—maybe weep."

There are few of us to whom the words "coming home" have no special memory. We at once

recall some long absence, and the ensuing return; the strange look worn by the most familiar things; the restlessness where heretofore we had found perfect rest. It is not all at once that we fit into our old place, and take up the old duties and the old pleasures lying ready to our hand. A subtle change has crept in somewhere; it is not at once that we find it in ourselves, not in our surroundings.

Gertrude felt all this when she came home with Geoffrey. Nothing had been altered in the house; Betty, the methodical old housekeeper, had not permitted even a chair to budge from the position it had held since Gertrude's childhood; and yet there was an indescribable sensation of strangeness about everything.

Before that impression had had time wholly to pass away, there came a link to bind the old life to the new. Spring made its appearance at least two weeks earlier than usual that year, and April was blooming with the roses which May generally claims as her own darlings. There was no risk in asking friends to the country, no fear of long, cold rain-storms shutting fast the doors, and east winds shaking at them for admission. So Mr. Oliver sent for a piano, on hearing through Geoffrey that Charlotte sang charmingly; had the old carriage relined and rejuvenated, and adopted Geoffrey's proposal of a set of croquet, which Gertrude was certain would never be used, if it depended upon Cyril to make up the game. So the all important day arrived and brought Mrs. Elliot and Charlotte; and—in spite of Gertrude's certainty—Cyril, too, was one of the party.

Gertrude had sent Geoffrey to the train to meet them, notwithstanding his assertion that he would go with more alacrity upon the day of their departure. "I thought both Mrs. Elliot and Charlotte were very kind to you last winter," she had said, gravely. She was not going to permit her main-stay in the way of a neighbor to prove refractory.

"So they were. One never runs into debt that a reminder to pay is not thrust at one."

Which speech called forth from Gertrude a wish that Mrs. Elliot could be induced to spend the whole summer at Broomielaw. Whereupon, Geoffrey responded by asking how long Gertrude expected to dispense the hospitalities of her uncle's establishment?—a question she declined to answer.

However, Geoffrey had proved amenable to reason, and at this moment Mr. Oliver and his guests were assembled in the wainscoted parlor after dinner. Mrs. Elliot had begged that the lights should not be brought just then; it was pleasant to go back, in the spring twilight, over the past, which lay far enough away to be seen only in shadows.

It is marvelous, the power of early associations, especially after one has passed middle age. There

could have been but little real sympathy between the simple country gentleman and the fashionable city lady; certainly, nothing in common in their lives. Yet, when they had traveled back into a past familiar to both, among people long forgotten, even their present modes of life began to be interesting the one to the other; a glimpse at an unknown land to each.

Mrs. Elliot's descriptions of people and society were charming to Mr. Oliver. It was like opening at random a new book full of pleasant gossip. She had met nearly every one worth meeting of celebrity, not only of this country, but those also who had crossed the ocean to us, and could tell something about them. When Mr. Oliver forgot to listen, and talked in his turn, Mrs. Elliot was delighted with the sayings of his favorites, and thought Edie Ochiltree and Andrew Fairservice quite worth knowing, though she had been content to see them dwell under the same roof with her, without caring to keep up their acquaintance. Gertrude was infinitely amused to find her unworldly uncle interested in the most worldly of lives, and his guest laughing over quaint oddities she would have deemed impertinences had she been brought into actual contact with them.

The two younger men had betaken themselves and their cigars to Mr. Oliver's study. In the parlor, old Betty, whose organ of precaution was much too strongly developed, had had a fire kindled, lest Mr. Oliver might find the long-closed room damp. The evening was mild, and, of course, Betty's fire oppressive; so Gertrude opened one of the long windows to the breeze. The sunset was still lingering invitingly, and the two girls strolled out on the lawn to watch the golden bars fading into pale primrose, on a delicate blue and sea-green sky.

"How you must love this fine old place, Gertrude," said Charlotte as they paced together under the oaks branching so high as to let in the sunset in a level glow beneath.

Gertrude stood still, with a little start. It had never occurred to her before, to look at this home of hers as a stranger might. She had simply accepted the dear face as a child a mother's, knowing well its dearness, never questioning of its fairness. But now she stopped and gazed round at the gray old house with its quadrangular roofs, which peaked every separate part of the building and looked, in the unreal sunset glow, as if they peered out of a picture of some quaint chateau. The warm westering light was on the windows too, as well as on the moss-seamed roofs, and touched them into flickering gold beneath their over-hanging vines. It glittered over the lawn-slope as well, and the few sheep still cropping the turf close; it bronzed the great boles of the oaks, but left their mistletoe-crowns dark above, and slanted off to turn into a gayer greenery the trailing elm beyond. And, still beyond, there was

the circling sweep of wood and fields about this slope of Broomielaw; the gradual decline to the green cornfields of the low grounds, with the hurrying brown river seen in ruddy sunset gleams through its fringe of trees; and here, there, everywhere, a swelling wave of hills rising and sinking in all the varied browns and greens of cultivation or of oak wood or pine—the black crests of the last cut sharply on the glowing sky.

It was a lonely scene enough, for those outlying, cultivated fields did not remind one of the neighborhood of man, but only lent breadth to the landscape by the heights and hollows simulated by their light and shade. The scattered houses hid themselves among the trees; the busy negro quarter was scattered also in single cabins, undiscernible in the woodland fringes. No monotone chorus, therefore, on the return from the field, nor wild call of the cattle home was heard, as in the old plantation days would have been at this hour, but just a twitter from the nesting birds; and then a whippoorwill's note through the "golden silence" of the sunset, like the slow, reluctant whistling of a lash, that presently shrills out with swift and vigorous strokes.

Charlotte shivered a little, and then smiled at the glow which these self-same observations had brought into Gertrude's face, and then the two girls wandered over the lawn to the side-garden, from which came the breeze in perfumed wafts, like a soft breath of invitation; they pushed open the low wicket, and were shut into a world of bloom. "It is like our garden at home," Charlotte had begun to say, as she passed under the over-arching boughs of roses and seringas. But she stopped, quick to perceive the difference between this trained luxuriance, and that lawless sweetness. "It is just the difference between you and the girls at home," she said, half to herself, half to Gertrude. "There is plenty of nature untrimmed away, and—Dear me, Gertrude, what a combination of ornament and usefulness! Tuberoses actually bordering a pea-patch!"

"And here are some lost violets, keeping themselves in hiding for you. I thought they were all gone," said Gertrude, as she stooped to part the leaves.

"Do not waste them on me; I prefer these tuberoses; they are so much richer in their fragrance, and do not need a whiff of fresh air to discover them. Do you know, the perfume of violets reminds me of the love of cold women, who only discover their feelings by some change in their outward circumstances."

"At least, they will not give you a headache, as the tuberoses may chance to do. Let me fasten this crimson bud in your hair, Charlotte; it is just the shade for it."

Charlotte stood still and submitted, with a little laugh.

"You are improving, Gertrude, in spite of

"getting out of reach of city training. We shall have you yet selecting combinations for evening dresses from the tints of the clouds, as you may remember my doing one sunset, at home, and shocking Mr. Forbes's taste. By the way, Mr. Forbes is here quite often?"

"Very often. You will have to make the most of the only man worth talking to in our neighborhood. You see, it is not as it used to be with us; our lands have gone down so, with no money to put upon them for years past, that only a few of the unchangeable, like Uncle Oliver, care to linger on here in the midst of changes. The younger men all go away to seek their fortunes; I wish I could have imported a few for your benefit."

"Oh, I shall do very well without them," Charlotte said indifferently, as she held open the garden gate for Gertrude. "Only girls who do not see many men find them so necessary. I am determined to discover what kind of life you lead amidst green fields and guileless lambs."

"And no hope of discovering a handsome shepherd tending the lambs?"

"We shall not miss him. A woman's curiosity keeps dullness at bay. Eve would have enjoyed looking around Paradise for a week or so, had she been made first: whereas, Adam grew dull at once without a companion. But I confess to live always in the country.—Have you any recollection of any other home, Gertrude?"

"None at all."

"And you will never have any other?" Charlotte half asked, half asserted. "I mean, that in time this place will be yours?"

"I hope that I shall not outlive Uncle Oliver," Gertrude hurried to say.

Charlotte smiled covertly. To some persons, the future is so much more interesting than the present, that they use this merely as a stepping-stone. But Charlotte had the good taste to drop the subject.

"By-the-bye, Gertrude, was your uncle ever married?"

"Could you not guess him a bachelor by his chivalrous reverence for all women? I am afraid it is proof positive he has not had a very near view of our sex. Even old Betty and I come in for our share of deference from Uncle Oliver."

"What a charming life yours must have been!" exclaimed Charlotte; "so free from the littleness of a woman's rule. I believe you never underwent it even at school?"

"No; Uncle Oliver did not think of sending me; and leaving home was to me such a dread, that I took good care not to speak of it."

"Of course, Mr. Forbes has always lived near you?"

"Cousin Geoffrey was away from home for a long time. I was quite a big girl when he came back."

"I imagined he had been a great deal with you. His manner shows so much—well, interest in you may perhaps express my meaning."

"A feeling of responsibility may account for his manner," replied Gertrude, keeping her eyes steadily upon the clouds, which were changing from rose to gray. "When Cousin Geoffrey came home, Uncle Oliver was weary of playing school-master, so turned me over to him. I never really studied with Cousin Geoffrey, though he tried to direct my reading, and gave me lessons in-botany."

"Of course, you learned a great deal," asserted Charlotte, her interest flagging.

"On the contrary, I liked the long walks, rather than the botany; and my taste in literature was much too light for my cousin's approval. Uncle Oliver sided with me in all our disputes, so that I was of little credit to my tutor."

"You do not seem to have disappointed him altogether, though in some things, I admit, you haven't his hearty approval; I fancy the school-master cannot quite forget the pupil. Our lives have been wonderfully different," she went on, thoughtfully, "though they began alike, in our both being shifted, after our mothers' death, upon hands that no doubt would willingly have washed themselves of us. You were left quite alone in the world; I might as well have been, for all I have seen of the old home since Aunt Margaret took me out of it. As the cheapest mode of educating me, she sent me to a convent, where my voice, my only gift, was conscientiously made the most of. I was also taught by Aunt Margaret that only during her life could I expect to have a home; that at her death Cyril would have everything. Of course, Aunt Margaret was right in telling me just what to look forward to."

Gertrude was puzzled by this confession of what Charlotte must be very sure was well known to every one. Did Charlotte wish to deprecate all interference with any plans Mrs. Elliot might have formed in regard to Cyril? But Gertrude did not feel moved to set Charlotte's mind at rest, by confiding to her how very harmless she herself was; that Geoffrey Forbes had too strong a claim on her to make her dangerous.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

[Written expressly for Godey's Lady's Book.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ,

Authors of "Ingremsco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

The girls had grown weary of strolling about the lawn, and had seated themselves under the elm. They had turned their faces to the west to watch the fading sunset tints, and thereby had the house behind them.

"Of course you remember telling me once that Aunt Margaret would like me to marry Cyril," continued Charlotte. "And Cyril——"

"What of Cyril?" asked a voice behind.

Cyril and Geoffrey had come over the grass unperceived, and unsuspecting that they might overhear something not intended for their ears. It was hardly surprising that Charlotte should start at the suddenness with which her words were taken up; but after one swift glance at Cyril's face, she answered, quite coolly:

"I was telling Gertrude of your half-formed plan for Europe this summer. Have you really decided to go?"

"My movements depend upon whether I can make an arrangement I have at heart."

He had placed himself in a position where he could see Gertrude's face, while she would have had to turn her head to look at him. A vivid flush had mounted to her brow, when Cyril first spoke. Perhaps he had startled her too; she may have feared lest he had caught the drift of Charlotte's remark, or she may have blushed for the girl's want of truth. Geoffrey was just behind Cyril; he had not heard what the girls were talking of, but he did see the color dying out of Gertrude's face, and the look of unfeigned admiration which Cyril did not take the trouble to hide, and

which Geoffrey never for a moment doubted had caused the blush.

A pang of the old jealousy smote Geoffrey. What had brought Cyril here? Was it indeed Charlotte, as he had believed, but as he remembered Gertrude had doubted she could do? What right had Gertrude to sit and be stared at in that fashion?

"'Arrangements' always sound business-like, so not to be understood by us—" Charlotte was remarking.

"That is hard, when my purpose is to make mine very plain."

"Is it I you wish to consult, Cyril?" asked Charlotte, with a sudden brightening which Geoffrey did not miss, if Cyril did. "Is it about going abroad?"

"If you please, it shall be," he said, quite gravely. "Which way shall I go? North or south, east or west? For whether I shall take an overcoat or an umbrella, depends upon the direction of my travels."

Charlotte was as ready with her good-humored laugh at herself as another, "An umbrella, in any case, Cyril, if you will let me warn you by that song of mine you never will hear out—

'Into each life some rain must fall,

Some days must be dark and dreary—'" she hummed. "And as to the overcoat, I would take one if you decided on the south, for you will be sure to veer round in the contrary direction. Witness your coming here, when you said most positively you would not."

Cyril laughed. "Sober second thought overcame some obstacles which at first seemed insurmountable."

"But which gave way to man's stern determination. I wish we women had the knack of overcoming obstacles."

"You do better—make a détour and get rid of them."

"Gertrude may answer you." Charlotte put

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up her pretty dimpled hands, as if to ward off a blow. "For me, I run away; I make it a point never to defend my sex. Perhaps Gertrude is less of a coward."

"Gertrude need not be on the defensive when she is not attacked," said Cyril, quickly. "She makes no detours, she has no subterfuges, she is too brave not to face an obstacle in her path."

"Take care you do not misplace your confidence," broke in Geoffrey, who by no means enjoyed Cyril's pretty speech. "Bravery is not a woman's attribute, and subterfuge is the natural retreat of cowardice."

"Then we should be held excused, if we are born cowards," retorted Gertrude.

"If one could trust to that same cowardice for keeping you out of danger," returned Geoffrey, with more asperity than was warranted by the mere general remark. "But I confess, I for one have but little of that perfect trust which casteth out fear. Only idiots have, in my opinion."

"I fancy Uncle Oliver is waiting for his coffee," said Gertrude, rising as she spoke. "Shall I send yours here?" she asked, turning to Charlotte.

Her brow was slightly contracted, whether by pain or anger, Charlotte could not guess. She did not wait for Charlotte's reply, but turned and walked rapidly toward the house.

If Geoffrey had wished to overtake her, and say something to do away with his last remark, which certainly she had felt as personal, Cyril was quicker, and had joined her. He evidently had some trouble in keeping pace with Gertrude's swift step, and only a moment to say: "You see I came down, after all, Gertrude. I do not know that I was wise, but you rushed away from us so suddenly, in town, that I had no time to—ask your opinion of my plans."

"My opinion!" Her voice had a bitter ring in it, which emphasized her words unwittingly. "It is such a worthless thing that you may have as much of it as you will."

"It is the only one I shall ask."

Gertrude made no answer. She had unconsciously slackened her speed, so that Charlotte and Geoffrey were close behind. On reaching the parlor, she found the coffee-urn awaiting her, and her uncle wondering what had detained her.

The girl's eyes were glistening with suppressed tears, which Geoffrey's words had failed to bring, when she came to her uncle's side with his cup. "Has anything vexed you, child?" asked Mr. Oliver, gently stroking the hand that set the cup down on the table near him.

She smiled and shook her head, and then went back to the coffee-urn, dividing her attention between filling the cups and listening to Mrs. Elliot, who was quite eloquent over a new dress trimming.

As for Charlotte, she had lingered in the door-

way, and for a moment barred Geoffrey's entrance, while she took occasion to say:

"Has not your Biblical education been just a little neglected, Mr. Forbes? If I dared, I would make a small correction in your quotation made a few moments ago."

"Thank you," he said, stiffly, not having as yet regained his equanimity.

She looked up with an arch show of terror, that won a smile in spite of him; seeing which she said:

"But perhaps your memory is rather Tennysonian than Paulinian, and would take a mere hint of

—the little rift within the lute,
Which widening, makes the music mute."

In all seriousness, Mr. Forbes, it won't do to show unfaith in us," she went on, shaking her pretty head gravely. "Of course Gertrude did not like it."

"Gertrude and I have known each other so long, that she does not heed what I say," returned Geoffrey, feeling called upon to make some apology.

"It is unfortunate when two persons know each other so intimately that they can say what they please. It becomes so difficult for one of them not to play the tyrant, and even try the torturer at times."

"I thought you women liked to be tyrannized over," he remarked.

"A man's fallacy. When we cannot escape, we may put a smiling front upon it, as many a married woman does. The question whether she actually enjoys the thumbscrew then becomes impertinent."

Geoffrey was half minded to echo the last word but how can he in the face of that deprecating glance of friendly warning, with which she moves aside from the doorway to let him enter.

"I wonder you were so irritable with Mr. Forbes, this evening," said the pretty peacemaker, as the two girls mounted the stairs together, on their way to bed. "Of course you knew he was only trying to tease you?"

"Did he tell you so?" asked Gertrude, rather icily.

"Certainly he did. He was dreadfully worried and said you ought to have been sure he meant nothing, as you know so well his true opinion of you."

Charlotte waited a moment, expecting a reply; but none being forthcoming, continued: "I was so dreadfully afraid Cyril would take up the gauntlet, for he has always been so fond of you. A misunderstanding with men so often leads to something serious, one cannot help feeling uncomfortable. Only Cyril is far too indolent to interfere in what is not his personal concern. The girl who marries him must fight her own battles."

"She will not be unfortunate even if she is quarrelsome," said Gertrude, briefly; and having gained the hall above, she bade Charlotte good-night.

That young lady was turning the lock of Mrs. Elliot's door, instead of her own. She found the maid already sent away, and she sat down in the window-seat with a slight yawn, her back to the moonlight.

"Thank heaven, there will be one man left, if Cyril does desert us, as he will be sure to do."

"I would let Mr. Forbes alone, if I were you," advised Mrs. Elliot. "He seems chained to Gertrude's chariot-wheels, and it is never good policy to attempt capturing what has already been appropriated."

"I rather think the situation is reversed and Gertrude is Mr. Forbes' captive. But I would much prefer adding a rivet to the chain, whichever drags it."

"That is far too nice work for a novice," said Mrs. Elliot, with emphasis. "Besides, I doubt if Mr. Forbes is one to be meddled with, with impunity."

"I doubt if any one is, if aware that he is being meddled with. There is much done, however, by falling into another's way of thinking. Limp with a lame man if you wish him to keep step with you."

"Your lame man may feel flattered, but you must not forget there are always spectators who will laugh or criticise. Believe me, you cannot be too careful in such matters."

"Not many spectators down here, I imagine. But you need not be uneasy, Aunt Elliot, I much prefer Gertrude should marry her cousin. I shall do nothing to interfere with the match."

"It would be most unwise in you to do so," said Mrs. Elliot, coldly. "I have very different plans, or rather hopes, for you, than that you should bury yourself here."

Charlotte pushed no inquiries into those plans, or hopes, before she went away to her own room. She probably had need of no instructions on that head.

CHAPTER IX.

"In the coppice the dear primroses

Are the smile of each dim green nook—

Gravely glad some—sunny, but cool

With the sound of the gurgling brook.

And by the wayside in a burst of delight,

From the world of faery and gnome,

All the flowers are crowding to see the sight

At their windows. My Lady come home."

"I can't see how she has the face to sing to a man as she does. Where's the difference as far as modesty is concerned, in a girl's standing up boldly and saying she loves a man, and her singing over and over again, 'I Love but Thee,' and 'I'll

Pray for Thee,' and that in her voice that goes through a body just as if she meant to do it? Not that I'd care for her prayers. It isn't the like of her has the promise of being heard. But she's no business to tell such things, no more has Mr. Geoffrey any right to listen to her, and I wonder Miss Gertrude sits still and stands it."

The sound of Charlotte's voice at the piano, floats in through the hop-shaded window of Betty's store-room, as that little woman enters, and as a sort of contemptuous accompaniment, flings down her bunch of keys with a jingle on an empty barrel-head. Betty always carries those keys about with her, not merely as cumbrous insignia of her office, but because she has firm faith in the efficacy of locks. Indeed, she treats every one in the house as a born thief, and does not consider even Mr. Oliver to be trusted in his own closets. As for Mr. Oliver, he had never thought of taking the keys from Betty's keeping, and would have been sorely perplexed if they had been demanded by Gertrude as her right. The old woman herself, would have resented any such inroad on her province. To eat and ask no questions, she believed to be a scriptural duty, taking St. Paul's injunction as meant for the regulation of family politeness.

But closets were the only things which needed locking up, according to Betty's theory. Certainly her opinions were never withheld by a judicious button on her lips. They were free to every one, Mr. Oliver, Geoffrey Forbes, Gertrude, as well as the most inferior servant on the place. Just now, having no other listener, she was giving them out liberally to herself, while she went on measuring flour into a wooden tray.

It was not an ordinary pantry in which the trim little body stood; but a large, airy room, lined with high presses and closets conveniently fitted into the wall. There was a window with a low, broad sill, flecked with leaf-shadows, and on this, where at the proper season, jams and jellies were set to harden in the sun, Betty had placed her tray, catching the flicker now and then on her broad cap-frill, or on the narrow bands of hair beneath, as she flitted to and fro.

"I remember it just as well as if it was last night," she went on to herself—"that evening the child came in here to me in the sunset as Mr. Geoffrey rode away. It was just there on that window-seat that she sat down, the child that had been chattering of her dolls not long ago, and of the chickens and the flowers only yesterday—and says she to me: 'Betty, something's happened to me. Something very uncommon. Something that will never happen again in my life.' Much the child knew about that!" says Betty with a grim smile. "But she gave me a start, that she did; and it didn't do me much good when she went on to explain how Mr. Geoffrey had asked her to be engaged to him, and she had promised to.

"Much she knew about what she was doing," she went on, going back to replace the lid of the flour-barrel. "It's my belief, Mr. Oliver was at the bottom of that business, though she didn't guess it. A settled man to take care of the child and make her happy, was his thought; as if it was the years that could teach a body to do that, any more than tomfoolery receipts in books will teach you to make bread. There's as much in the way you place it as in the rising. Bread won't lighten anywhere you may choose to set it down. You can chill it or you can heat it, and both are against it. And that's what Mr. Geoffrey's doing to the child. It's not my fault, if he takes no warning. I've told her often enough, its easy to pick up a husband with a yes, but a no will never drop him. That's only in the death-angel's hands, and as they say he's but one wing, he's sometimes slow of flight."

Whether this last strikes her as a murderous thought, she adds as she takes up the tray, "I'm sure it isn't any harm to think of folks in a better land, and to feel pleased they're so well off instead of bothering in this. It's the more comforting, if you believe there are many mansions in the New Jerusalem, and you've a chance to get pleasantly settled among strangers. But that's small concern to Miss Gertrude as yet—Candace, well, you've come!" as a black face peered timidly in at the door. "Did you think the wheat was just sowed that's to make this bread, that you've been waiting so long on the way? Here, child, take it to Aunt Chloe and tell her—"

While Charlotte's voice had penetrated all the way to Betty's domain, and carried her so far back into the past, oddly enough, it had the same effect on Geoffrey, near at hand, when Charlotte fancied she held him fast.

She had been at the piano in the shady parlor, since breakfast, at first playing gay waltzes to the hum of voices on the piazza, whence the whiff of a cigar came in now and then upon the breeze. Then she caught Gertrude's step in the hall, and Cyril went to meet it, and he was asking something in an eager tone. Charlotte's color deepened, and she broke off her waltz and began to sing low snatches of songs, most of which were favorites of Geoffrey's. They soon brought him to the window, where he stood, careful to keep the cigar-smoke out of the room. He was still hoping that Gertrude would come out to him; he could listen to Charlotte just as well on the porch, and Gertrude might know he wanted her.

But when those two voices in the hall went on persistently, Geoffrey flung away his cigar with a jerk, and pushed open the window to the floor. He leaned against the piano, at first in silence, while she struck the first notes of "The Three Fishers."

"There is a stretch of pines near here, Miss Burnley, where I would like to hear your voice.

With just enough wind enough for an accompaniment, you might give us 'The Three Fishers' there. You know the wind amongst the pines sounds like the sea."

"Does it? To tell the truth, I don't know a pine from an oak," she declared, looking at him, naively. "Gertrude has a contempt for my ignorance, no doubt, yet it is nevertheless true. But I would like to hear what the wind says."

"We can easily manage it. The woods are not much more than a mile from here. To-night the moon is full."

Gertrude, who had paused just then in the doorway, could not help smiling at Geoffrey's ready suggestion. It must be the magic of Charlotte's voice, she thought, remembering how contumacious he had once been on the subject of "The entertainment of her guests."

"Oh, that will be charming," exclaimed Charlotte. "I shall sing my best for you as a reward."

"Make it a bribe, instead; and give me 'Auld Robin Gray' now, will you not?"

"If you think Aunt Margaret is safe with Mr. Oliver in the study—" answered Charlotte, playing as she spoke a few soft notes by way of prelude. "The ballad is no favorite of Aunt Margaret's, I am sorry to say. It is the moral she dislikes. I wonder at what age the spirit of worldliness takes easy possession of us?"

"I confess all my sympathy is for Auld Robin," said Geoffrey. "It must have been hard to find the love he had sacrificed so much for, and had every right to, not only not his, but another's. No matter how well the girl strove to behave, she wronged him."

"But really, is there anything as helpless as a woman, Mr. Forbes?" appealed Charlotte, with a pretty upward glance at him. "She is worse off than the unjust steward, being less strong to dig, and she is ashamed to beg, and so she marries. She cannot starve, I suppose?"

"She had better starve than be untrue," said Gertrude's voice behind. "The love was not dead in Jeanie's heart, and she ought to have been as true to the feeling as to the lover himself."

"You have been out, Gertrude?" asked Charlotte, rather irrelevantly. Gertrude had her broad hat on her arm, and her gloves in her hand, as she stood leaning against the piano.

"No," she answered, carelessly. "Cyril offered to drive me in for the mail, and as I wanted to order one or two things for Betty from the little store at the station, I shall have to leave you two to Robin Gray's woes, until—good bye; I know of old, Cyril's horses will not stand."

"You see how punctual I can be—" she was saying, as Cyril took his place beside her in the light, open wagon. "I didn't even stop to put on my gloves."

"You were afraid of fretting the horses by keeping them standing," suggested Cyril.

"And have too high an opinion of your temper to suppose it could be ruffled by a half-hour's waiting," she added, smiling.

"Do not be too confident there. The truth is, Gertrude—" he said, looking round at her, as he gathered up the reins, "you have fallen into the habit of thinking me a lazy fellow, who must necessarily take every position in life easily. But that is because there is very little that is worthy of exertion. I often think if I do set my heart on anything, I shall be so persistent, my best friends will not know me."

"Do not set your heart on anything, then, for I confess I would be sorry not to recognize you."

"You might have made a prettier speech, and said that you could not fail to recognize me in any position."

"But that would not be true; for there are several which I fear would change you totally."

"Now you make me curious, and you must illustrate, so that I can understand you."

"I'll do nothing of the kind. I consider illustrations the humbug of the age," said Gertrude, quickly.

"But they are great helps to unimaginative people," retorted Cyril.

"They only serve to keep lazy people from thinking."

"Well then," persisted Cyril, "you will have to give me the bare fact as to what I would be a failure in."

"I thought I said in more than one position."

"One will suit my purpose, for I really believe you were only thinking of one. You have raised my curiosity, and I shall not be satisfied until you tell me."

Gertrude shook her head. "One's opinions are not to be forced from one as a purse might be, with a sharp—'Stand and deliver.'"

"But if I ask for it as a charity?"

"I never give to a beggar, on principle."

"That I know is not so. But I do not intend to be seduced from the path of self-knowledge, so come back to the question."

"It isn't so difficult to answer. No doubt you would be a failure as a poor man, for instance."

"I don't agree with you there. I have a strong inclination, at times, to make a benefaction of my money, and begin life as many men do, with my five wits. Yet there are some few things I would rather buy than forego—which I might have to do, were I a pauper."

"Friendship is not marketable. You might test that, for one thing," began Gertrude.

"It is brittle ware. There is scarcely one in a thousand who is capable of being a friend."

"I would be very sorry to believe that," said Gertrude, thoughtfully.

"You will learn its truth some day. How

many at middle age do not look upon friendship as one of the hallucinations of youth?"

"I hope I may never arrive at that age, unless I may keep my hallucinations. I suppose, as you have no faith in friendships, you are incapable of feeling one."

"Certainly I am for you, if you intend to make me such an offer. Don't do it, please; for I would not like to refuse you, and yet there is no one I would care less to make my friend."

Cyril was watching Gertrude's face closely whilst he made this rather uncivil remark. He must have been disappointed if he expected to find pain or displeasure, or even pleasure, depicted there, for he turned away suddenly as Gertrude answered, laughing:

"It is kind of you to be so frank. We women are vain of the impression we make, but I had no idea mine was to be so transient with you. If I had had, I don't know now how I could have fulfilled my promise to Charlotte, and asked you to come down and see Uncle Oliver with Mrs. Elliot. But of course——"

"So it was Charlotte who suggested your asking me," interrupted Cyril, with some mortification in his voice. "Of course I could accept her invitation."

"I am glad you could, for she was anxious to secure four for croquet, and we would have been at a loss without you," said Gertrude, promptly.

There was not time to say more, for down there in the deep cut the train writhed shrieking round the bend, and the next moment Cyril was reining in his horses before the low white building which served for station and post-office.

While Cyril was receiving the Broomielaw bundle of letters and papers, Gertrude had beckoned over to her a clerk from the one little shop across the way, and so had discharged herself of Betty's commission, and was ready for the homeward drive. She glanced over her shoulder as she went, never dreaming that in the aftertime all these things, on which she looked so carelessly now, would be found photographed on her memory like the unimportant details which the sun groups round the central scene. The white glare of the sunshine on those two low buildings; the waiting mule-team, and the slow group of negroes on the platform; the black line of railroad stretching from the bend up to a far perspective between red-clay banks; the rolling country back, with swelling waves of green fields, and woods May-bright or fir-dark against a cloudless sky; the stretch of fallow fields, grown up with pale sedge-grass and weeds and weed-high pines, along which now the road is passing.

"That is part of Clifton—you have heard me speak of the Cliffords?" said Gertrude, pointing it out. "That is one of the many changes in the neighborhood; the old, old homes passing into

the hands of strangers. You would not know the country as it was, and as I can remember it when a child. Now, you have only come down in a friendly way to spy out the nakedness of the land."

Cyril did not answer; was not even looking. There was a silence of a few minutes, in which Gertrude was permitted her own thoughts. Perhaps Cyril did not intend to show so plainly what his were, as he managed to do when he asked:

"Confess, Gertrude, that you like luxury, and all that money alone can bring you?"

"It is humiliating to have to confess one's weaknesses, but it is best to be perfectly honest. Not a year ago I was very ignorant, and despised money and all that it could bring me; but now——"

"Well, what of now?"

"I have tasted the pleasant fruit, and am no longer ignorant."

"Would you marry for money, Gertrude?" asked Cyril, abruptly. "Tremaine, for instance. He is rich."

"Certainly, if we could have a perpetual ball; but that would be scarcely possible. My idea of the luxury which money brings is not a stupid husband."

"But a rich fellow whom you liked well enough? One for whom you could feel a friendship? You would not refuse him, would you?"

"It would be a cruel temptation," she said, lightly. "But you need not feel anxious about me; my fate will be a very different one."

"Very likely you think you will marry for love. All girls think that, do they not?"

Her color brightened a little under his eyes, and she said, hastily:

"We were not speaking of feelings, only of worldly prospects. I predict I will marry a man of but moderate fortune; one a good deal older than I am——"

"Say twenty years," interrupted Cyril.

"Precisely. One who will take care of me, and——"

"Break your heart with his jealousy, if you manage to give it to him," interrupted Cyril again.

"I am not frightened," returned Gertrude, laughing.

"If you really have any taste for being watched and found fault with for a mere nothing, and if it is pleasant to you to be always smoothing things over, then you had better marry your cousin," said Cyril, coolly.

"Thanks for the advice. I shall be sure to follow it."

"Good heavens, Gertrude! you have no such idea!" asked Cyril, turning to her as if alarmed.

"Why not? Cousin Geoffrey is not stupid, as Mr. Tremaine is."

"But every one who is rich is not like Tremaine."

There must be some decently pleasant men among so many."

"No doubt there are hundreds. I have fore-shown my fate. You will see it fulfilled some day. I only wish I could foretell something pleasant in some one else's fortune."

"I can't imagine in whom you feel so much interest," he said, coldly.

"Can't you?" asked Gertrude, laughing.

"I know of no one likely to care for me or my money, if that is what you mean. Pshaw, Gertrude; try some other way if you wish to tease me," said Cyril, testily. "My friends and acquaintances are very like the rest of the world. Aunt Margaret certainly likes my money; and as to Charlotte——"

"I certainly did not mean to assert that she likes you only for your possessions, for I am sure it is not true;" was Gertrude's quick rejoinder.

"Oh, she is as honest as any of you can be," said Cyril, bluntly. "She would no doubt take your purse, and look all the time as if she were taking you instead. Other girls take your heart, and look so innocent, as if they did not know they were doing anything."

"You should not leave such valuables unguarded," said Gertrude lightly. "It is scarcely stealing to take what you do not think it worth while to take care of."

"A polite way of telling me we are precious fools, and—hey, jingle! steady, Job, old fellow! Confound the beasts! What are they after?" exclaimed Cyril, as the horses, with a sudden bound which nearly upset the wagon, swerved at a meeting of two roads, and were off down that branching to the left at a speed beyond his power to check.

"Don't be frightened," said Cyril, after a vain effort of strength to pull in the horses. "Is not this the way to Oakland Hall we took last week? The road is a good one; if the beasts will have a run, they could not have timed it better."

"If the avenue gate is only open——" replied Gertrude, calmly.

Cyril had thought of that danger, but he had hoped she would not. "We are a full mile off yet. We must trust to luck."

"Rather, to a good God."

Cyril looks at her, as she says it in that low, steady voice. Her face is very pale, but there is no terror in it; only an earnest, expectant outlook, as though she were gazing into another than this world of shifting lights and shades, which shuts them in. This stretch of road lies broad and straight through the wood, and the oaks and the tulip trees interlace their young greenery high overhead, and weave their net-work of sun and shadow in the path of the hurrying horses' feet. A mocking-bird rises, startled out of his shrill mimicry of the cat-bird's cry, and Gertrude glances up at the rustling through the branches——

up, to the blue heaven they frame in. Is it a farewell, that glance, to all the bright spring gladness of life around her? Is it an appeal—a prayer? Cyril cannot tell; only that the expectant eyes are lowered again to the steady outlook for the gates that God shall open unto life, or shut on death.

The man beside her there is far less calm at heart, though outwardly he is unshaken, with a firm grasp on the reins, and a steady, watchful gleam in the gray eyes, darkened with pain. Life might, indeed, have pain in store for him, beside which even a violent death were painless. But is it certain death that they are facing—death together, swift and sudden? Might it not be mutilation, death in life for a long waste of years to come? Or—if he should escape and lose her—

“The gate is shut.”

“For heaven’s sake, do not jump. To sit quiet is your only chance.”

He throws his arm around her as he speaks—perhaps to prevent her moving, or to break the shock when the horses should strike the gate. Her eyes were strained, fixed on that gate. She does not seem conscious of his touch, though she hears him say:

“Gertrude, can you forgive me?”

She wonders vaguely what his fault to her could be, that he should remember it at such a moment. Something that she has forgotten. “Freely,” she answers. “Though I can remember nothing.”

“Nothing! And I have brought you to this fearful death! Do you call that nothing?”

“Are you not sharing the danger?” And then she looks round suddenly into his face, and all the pale calm of her own is broken up, and a wild terror flashes into her eyes. “Cyril, Cyril, you are not throwing your life away? If you can save yourself, do not think of me. I know it is impossible with me; my dress would catch and be my destruction: But you—you—”

Is it only the headlong rushing speed at which they are going which thus takes her breath away? Cyril laughs a little bitterly. “Do you think life is so sweet I would buy it by such an act? But rest content; only a madman would make such a leap.”

Their voices are breathless and low; the rushing air snatches them away. The roadside trees go by more dizzily, in the seconds that are moments—nay, a very lifetime. Sunshine and shadow blot themselves together in the road, the long worm-fence in front is one brown blur across the green; the shut gate, and the tattered little negro perched upon the topmost rail and waving a straw hat, in glee at the race—

That small, helpless life, too. Cyril knows he cannot save even that. He makes a sudden helpless gesture; he does not speak, for Gertrude has

not seen the child. Her eyes are gazing on vacancy: a tender rush of tears is dimming them.

“Gertrude, whom are you thinking of?”

“Uncle Oliver. It will be such a shock to him.”

Cyril’s heart gives one great, joyful bound. Her tears are for her uncle, not for Geoffr y Forbes. She does not see his face, or she might wonder at the strange happiness in it. “God help us—” she says softly; and shuts her eyes in a woman’s weak effort to steady her nerves by not seeing the precise moment when the horses must strike the gate. The devils in the herd of swine were not more bent on self-destruction than these horses. Cyril can only manage to keep them in the middle of the road. The light wagon sways and bounds—in one instant more—

Cyril’s arm tightens about Gertrude. One last look into her drooping face. And then he raises his head.

The gate stands wide open.

“God—”

It is his voice that speaks the holy name, in which is all help. One low, still word. But it reaches Gertrude. She opens her eyes to see the gate passed and the danger over.

CHAPTER X.

“I say as I fynde,

That woman’s love is but a blast,
And torneth with the wynde.”

Gertrude never thought of putting a question as to the opening of that gate. It might have unfolded as miraculously as those of St. Peter’s prison; the deliverance was the same. But after that, the horses were soon brought down into a quiet walk, too tired to have a will of their own.

“Would you rather get out of the wagon, Gertrude?” asked Cyril, presently, as he turned to go back along the leafy avenue which shut them in. “There is really no danger of the horses running again, but perhaps you are nervous.”

“No,” she answered. “Let us get home as quickly as we can. The horses do not look as if they had breath for another race.”

So they drove slowly back through the open gateway, where Cyril was glad to find the small tatterdemalion still staring after them—scarcely realizing what he had done; even when Cyril’s handful of silver rattled in his ragged pockets.

Gertrude and Cyril had very little to say to each other during the drive home. It was not until they were within sight of the house, that Gertrude shook off her awe; and came back to the fact that no one but Cyril and herself could entirely appreciate the danger they had passed through.

“Do not let us mention our escape,” she said, hastily. “It would trouble Uncle Oliver; and

"I could not bear to have every one question-
ing and making a fuss over it. I shall tell no one
if you will promise not to."

And Cyril gladly promised.

He was giving close attention to his horses, as
he drove up to the porch-steps, and he had no
attention to spare for the fact that the sound of
the wheels had brought Charlotte out from the
parlor, and Geoffrey reluctantly after her. Ger-
trude, when she saw him, did not wait for Cyril
to help her from the carriage, but held out her
hand to Geoffrey. There was something inde-
scribably soft and gentle in her manner; the
tender influence which death, in whose presence
she had stood, had thrown around her. Geoffrey
had been so near losing her that she felt sorry for
him; and he thought she was trying to soothe his
natural irritation at her driving with Cyril: trying
to conciliate him for her offence towards him.

The four started off quite soberly that evening
to the pinewood, Charlotte having recalled her
desire to try the effect of her voice among the
pines. It was the last opportunity Cyril would
have of judging of it, she said, if he should per-
haps hold to his original purpose of leaving
Broomielaw to-morrow.

The full moon had lent them all the light of
her broad countenance along the thicket-bordered
lane, and across the fields. Gertrude was leading
the way with her cousin, Charlotte and Cyril not
very far behind. The pinewood was nearly
reached, glooming up yonder on the hillside,
when a sudden idea flashed into Charlotte's busy
mind to improve the shining moments.

"Cyril, have you noticed Mr. Forbes to-day?"
she asked. The wood was so near that she must
be abrupt to get through all she had to say.

"Noticed Forbes, Charlotte? Well, I believe
his six feet two won't easily escape detection."

"But really noticed him? Cyril, I think there
is something wrong between Gertrude and her
cousin. He had a long talk with her after she
came in from driving with you. Of course, I
don't know what was said, but as I chanced to
meet Mr. Forbes in the hall when he was going,
I asked if he were not to stay to dinner, and you
can't imagine how abrupt he was in his refusal."

"I should argue that he had no appetite."

"And Gertrude, she has been so distraught and
quiet ever since. Besides, he did not seem at all
inclined to come this evening, after himself pro-
posing the expedition this morning."

"You had better seize upon an opportunity to
ask for an explanation of his singular conduct,"
proposed Cyril.

"You acknowledge, then, that it is singular?"

"I suppose any one's would be so, if you put
two and two together which were never intended
for addition," said Cyril, carelessly. "It is
rather an uncomfortable habit of yours, Charlotte,
and I am sorry to say it is growing upon you."

"It is far better than not to see what is just
under one's eyes. I venture to say it would never
occur to you that your drive with Gertrude has
anything to do with their quarrel?"

"Scarcely," said Cyril, laconically.

"Yet I am sure it is at the bottom of it. There
was no doubt that Mr. Forbes was annoyed when
you drove off. I really think he would have been
glad just then if the horses had run away and
broken your neck."

"Very Christian in him; and using your rule
of putting this and that together, I should argue
that he has scarcely a cousinly regard for Ger-
trude, as her risk would have been great if my
neck had been broken."

"Oh, you know what I mean," said Charlotte,
pettishly.

"Don't give me credit for much discrimination.
An oracle would have been of small service to me
by way of warning, if I had lived in those absurd
old times."

"Then I will speak quite plainly, and tell you
that I am sure Gertrude and Mr. Forbes have
quarreled, that you are in some way implicated,
and that Gertrude is wretched about it."

"How does she show her wretchedness?" asked
Cyril, sympathetically.

"Oh, she is quiet and depressed. I am sure it
is about the drive, for she will not mention it, and
if I speak of it, she either does not answer, or
talks of something else, as if she could not bear
the subject."

"But might not Gertrude dislike the subject,
and yet her cousin have nothing to do with it?"

"No, for I see no reason for it."

"I thought I drove her, not Forbes," Cyril said,
with a shrug.

"But that's no reason—Cyril, you certainly do
not mean that you have been so recklessly foolish
as to——"

"To what? I never could finish off a sentence
belonging to some one else."

Charlotte had paled suddenly in speaking, to
the very lips; but a glance at Cyril's unmoved
face—he was not looking at her—brought the
color back into hers. It was quite coolly, that she
completed her sentence:

"As to address Gertrude."

"I see nothing very reckless or foolish in it,"
said Cyril, with another shrug. "My wife will
not starve, and if she can like me well enough to
put up with me, it would not be foolish to have
one."

"But it is reckless to go after another man's
property, and foolish to ask what one cannot
give."

"I am not so sure she is another man's prop-
erty. That Forbes would like her to be, I
have not a doubt; but in this blessed world self-
denial is a virtue which if we do not practice our-
selves, some one will for us. My ideas of love

are not very high-flown, but I should not be satisfied with the amount Gertrude gives her cousin."

"If Gertrude is thinking over your offer, I can't say I should feel flattered if I were in your place, for I never saw a sadder, more harassed face than hers," said Charlotte, decidedly viciously.

"I am not the cause, I fear. I shall never address a girl when there is a chance of a refusal with a long drive home before us, I can tell you."

If Charlotte drew a deep sigh of relief, it did not escape her lips. They only parted to say quite lightly: "You are always trying to make one believe such nonsense, Cyril."

He glanced down into the fair upraised face with a sort of accustomed admiration which did not preclude a little impatience.

"And you are so over-quick to believe. So like that beautiful white bird that frequents the sea-shore. However," he added, "do not misunderstand me. If I have not addressed Gertrude it is only because I am very sure she would not care for me."

This piece of information did not seem to be a startling bit of news to Charlotte. Only a hard look came into her downcast eyes, as she suggested softly: "She might care for your money."

"I have grave doubts of that. But I don't know why a man should not buy a wife as well as a horse if he has the means to do so. The wife could not run away with you, only from you, and that's no risk to your life."

"You'll not get a wife until you grow a little more serious on the subject," she said, laughing in a relieved sort of way. "Ah, well, I do not wonder; you men have such a jolly good time, as Mr. Tremaine would say, that I wouldn't settle down either, if I were you. But, indeed, Cyril," continued Charlotte, "it is your evident duty to see Mr. Forbes and tell him that Gertrude is not in the least to blame for driving with you. You might bear all the fault, if there is any, and hint that there is only a friendship between you; for I assure you, Mr. Forbes is dreadfully jealous, and Gertrude is annoyed and anxious. I am sure you would be sorry for Gertrude if you were thrown as closely with her as I, and saw how she suffers."

"I have much more sympathy for myself, under the circumstances. Don't you think it would be as well for me to speak to Gertrude as to Forbes? He might take offense, and something unpleasant might occur. Jealous lovers are so unreasonable; and no doubt Gertrude could better explain our position, if I explained it to her," said Cyril, cautiously.

"Perhaps, if you are discreet you can manage Gertrude; but I would prefer such a piece of business with Mr. Forbes. Cyril," continued Charlotte, stopping suddenly as she saw Gertrude

and Forbes apparently waiting for them a few yards in advance. "Cyril," she said, sinking her voice almost to a whisper, "you must not quote me to Gertrude. Peacemakers' names are written in heaven, but certainly their reward is not on earth."

"Never fear. I am under far too much obligation to you for telling me how matters stand to think of getting you into trouble. I will take care your name does not pass my lips."

Satisfied with this promise, Charlotte tripped lightly up the slope, and presently they were deep in the pinewood.

They walked on, all together, for a few moments, and then Charlotte stood still and looked about her in evident disappointment.

"What, sing here, Mr. Forbes? But one might as well be in a church."

It was solemn enough. Here, in the heart of the pinewood, the light fell in cold, white patches through the black boughs arching overhead. That black roof—the black, straight columns of the pines supporting it—the dearth of undergrowth and tangle of vines, all that fretwork which makes another wood gay—join to make this solemn and full of awe, as some vast, empty cathedral at the dead of night. Or, perhaps, not altogether empty; perhaps there comes the patter of a falling cone, like a hushed footfall in the silence; and one may, if one gazes out long enough, see,

"Rising up soft and slow

As a spirit in the stillness of the wood."

A slim white wraith of a dogwood tree stand beckoning in the far end of yonder dim aisle; and all the while a faint intoning rises and sinks overhead. It has a strange effect on Charlotte after she has stood a moment listening. She lets her hand fall slowly out of Cyril's arm as they stand together, and moves a little apart, then presently sinks down, half kneeling, half sitting against the great dark column of a pine. And then her voice breaks out into an old French litany she had learned at school from the Sisters. A sweet and supplicating strain, with the rhythmic accompaniment sighing overhead; a cry from a weary heart, rather than a broken one.

They all stand spell-bound; Gertrude with her hands unconsciously folded together; Geoffrey drawing a step nearer the singer. Only Cyril has rather a skeptical look in his eyes as he watches her. The whole may be just a little theatrical; though it may be doubted whether all good acting is not the true life, for the moment, to the artist. As Charlotte half knelt, half leaned there in her white dress, one round white arm flung up against the dark tree's bole, and the moonlight flickering down from a rent in the boughs over her fair head and uplifted face, she might have passed for Christabel at her orisons in the wood.

And then the strain died away slowly and

softly, and in the pause Charlotte had shifted her position slightly and as if unconsciously, and was seated now on the spicy brown carpet of pine-tags under the tree. The wind had risen, and Charlotte's quick ear caught the tide-like ebb and flow among the boughs, and chimed in with the wild

"Mary, come and call the cattle home, and call the cattle home,
Across the sands of Dee."

Long before

"They rowed her in across the crawling foam,"

Charlotte had drawn Geoffrey to her side. Her singing had always an enchanting effect upon him. Her presence had none whatever; though he acknowledged her beauty, he never felt it. But when she sang, Geoffrey comprehended the mystic legends of Mermaid and Lurlei voices, alluring men from the every-day sober paths of life. He was so absorbed now that he did not observe Gertrude had seated herself at some distance from Charlotte, and that Cyril had stretched himself on the grass at her feet. But nothing escaped Charlotte, neither Gertrude's preoccupied manner, nor Cyril's evident intention of a change of partners for the walk home. Charlotte saw that she had made a mistake, and she was the first to break the spell she had cast over her listeners. But the raveling of a skein never runs as smoothly as the knitting of it. Singing gay songs did not bring Cyril back to her side, though they rather broke the charm which detained Geoffrey.

"Come, Cyril," Charlotte called out. "I have sung myself hoarse, and it is as cool and damp here as a vault. Let us go home."

"Very well, you and Forbes go on; Gertrude and I are coming," replied Cyril, as coolly as if the arrangement were an indifferent matter to all concerned.

Charlotte did not care to show her annoyance, and walked on with Geoffrey, who inwardly used some imprecations upon Cyril's cool impudence, as he termed it. Yet as the latter was to leave next morning, Geoffrey could afford to keep his temper and be civil to Charlotte, who certainly was not to blame for Cyril's misdoings. Besides, it could make but little actual difference to Geoffrey whether Gertrude walked at his side or just behind him, so near that he could distinctly hear every word she said. That she spoke but little, he certainly noticed, and was secretly gratified by her taciturnity.

One low sentence spoken by Cyril, Geoffrey did not overhear, and at a certain abrupt turn in the road, not very far from the gate, he grew angry and annoyed to find that Gertrude and Cyril had lingered, and there was no sign of them to be seen.

"Why, where can they be?" exclaimed Charlotte. "Are you sure Gertrude quite knows the way, in this light? Let us turn and look for them."

But Geoffrey would not. He considered it in decidedly bad taste that Gertrude should loiter in such a marked manner, and for once he did not care to show what he was thinking. Indeed, he hurried Charlotte on much faster than was at all necessary, greatly to her annoyance. If they could have guessed how devoutly Gertrude was wishing for them, they would have been slightly mollified.

"One moment, Gertrude," Cyril had said, just before they entered the narrow fringe of oakwood on which Broomielaw house looked down, and into which Charlotte and Geoffrey had passed out of sight. "One moment, Gertrude. This is my last chance to speak to you. I can't go to-morrow leaving unsaid all I came here to say."

The two had been walking on together very silently, Cyril watching the girl's unconscious face attentively in the moonlight. There needed no very acute observer to see that the smooth surface of her life had been ruffled; but Cyril failed to find written in her face either suffering or unhappiness. That she was silent, argued nothing; for they had long been on those pleasant terms of friendship, where to exert one's self to talk is not considered a polite duty.

Gertrude stopped mechanically. She had been wandering so deep in her own thoughts, that she could not enter into his all at once, having no clue to them. She stood still, but she did not raise her eyes to his, even when he spoke.

"Gertrude, I came here to ask you something. Has it ever occurred to you during our long acquaintance that I love you?"

Her eyes were not raised to his even then. The heavy lids lifted with a start, but sank again before her glance reached his.

"No," she answered hastily. "Nor to you, unless it has this moment."

"You are wrong there. I have known it for some time. It was scarcely worth while to speak of my love when I plainly saw it was uninteresting to you. And even now, I am not sure that it would not be wiser in me to be silent."

She glanced up at him with a pained, shocked look in her eyes, that Geoffrey had not found there when he had told her of Charlotte's warning. And then she turned her face aside, and stood gazing out blankly into the moonlit distance; as if she had forgotten he was waiting her answer.

"I don't ask many words on your part," Cyril said, gently. "I would like to hear, though, that you care a little for me."

"I care very much for you," Gertrude was speaking with an effort; "but indeed, indeed, you must forget that you ever said this to me."

"I am not ashamed of it," said Cyril, quietly. "Even if I had been very sure you would refuse me, I suppose in time I would have asked you the same question. But Gertrude, is it impossible?—"

"Yes, impossible," she interrupted. "Yet I cannot tell you how painful it is to me to refuse you such a worthless thing as you would think my love, if you really knew me as I am."

"Even a little would be wealth to me," he said, eagerly.

"I have not even that little to give. If I had suspected this," she said, in a low, hushed voice, brokenly; "if I had come home long ago—or wiser still, if I had never gone away—"

"Do not say that," broke in Cyril, earnestly. "I cannot, for the life of me, regret your coming to us. Nor will you when I tell you you have made my life purer and better. One grows so used to shams in this lying world, that it does one good to find something true and honest. It never harms a man to love a good woman, even if he gets nothing in return; so you need not worry over me as over one you have injured."

Gertrude looked at him with shining eyes.

"Ah, Cyril, it is kind in you to try to take away the sting from the wound; but I must blame myself in a way you cannot understand just now."

She could not say more, for surely it would not help him to know that she was engaged to another man. It would not soothe his pain to be told why she could not love him.

"I shall never blame you, so you must not be hard on yourself. You have done nothing to mislead me. To-day, when death seemed near—you know they say sometimes in the death-struggle all the past comes before one—but to me it was a vision of the future. A beautiful, false dream."

"It would have been better if we had both died," Gertrude said, softly.

"So for a moment I thought then. Afterwards, when life seemed sweeter, I envied the boy who saved you. But all this is idle—"

He could not see her face, only the drooping brown head on which the moonlight lay. There was something in the attitude which checked him, and made him hold out his hand to her and say, steadily:

"Now you must promise not to be sorry for me."

She only stirred to put her hand in his. It was hard, hard to give up this friend who had been so kind to her when she was shy and uncomfortable among strangers. It was hard—

When their hands fell apart the two walked on together swiftly and silently, until they came again within sound of Charlotte's voice. Evidently the conversation between her and Geoffrey had become musical, for there were frequent pauses, and then she would give snatches first of one air, then of another, which reached the two walking out of sight behind. The moon was sinking now under the hill; the roadside thicket shadowed Gertrude's face from Cyril, though she was conscious that he was striving to see it. And the fear smote her

that perhaps it would always be so; that he would never see her as she was. She felt she was not dealing openly with him in keeping back the knowledge of her engagement to her cousin, and yet, how to speak now—

It was he who was speaking:

"Have a little patience with me, Gertrude. I have something yet to say to you."

She stopped, with somewhat of the courage which one finds before a needful time of suffering—the knowledge that it had to be borne, nerving her.

They had passed out from the lane, upon the hillside where the slanting moon still lingered, shut out by no trees, and where Cyril could see Gertrude's face unshadowed, ghostlike in the moonlight. Perhaps it was for this reason that he chose to stop her just here; perhaps with some memory of yesterday when she had stolen away alone to this favorite haunt of hers, where Cyril had come upon her lying half in the sunshine on the hillside, half in the rayed-out gold of the Scotch-broom thicket, in a silence broken only by the field lark she was watching sailing up the blue, and by the soft May wind that came in a long tidal swell from the pinewood, across the underlying wheat-fields, and then died away in a faint stirring of broom branches drooping down their shadows, purpling in the sunshine on the girl's white dress. There is only the wan moonlight now, instead of the glad sunshine, and the girl looks pale instead of flushed in it.

They stand in the midst of that spacious terraced natural parterre of broom, that in this light appears more and more like a laid out garden, with trim borders and hedge-rows, and winding thickets of shrubbery, stiff, upright, single plants, or clumps that pour down one dense shower of bloom to the ground. Yesterday, it had seemed King Midas's garden burning in the sunshine, all one golden glow that hardly gave a hint of black stems and small, stiff-pointed, dark green leaves. The night has pale the golden shower, but brings out the subtle spicy fragrance all the more, as Gertrude crushes through the thicket, almost breast-high at this spot. And here for a long moment, an immense time to Gertrude, the two stand in perfect silence, face to face, with just that clump of broom between; and wait until Charlotte's voice dies quite away, and it is evident that she and Geoffrey are not returning in search of them.

Cyril is, of course, the first to speak, which he does apologetically:

"Perhaps you think it unreasonable in me not to take as final the answer you gave me just now. I have succeeded in convincing myself that I was much too abrupt and hasty, and that I did not leave you time to question your own heart. That, after all, you might find some slight response to my love. Indeed, I could persuade myself of

anything, rather than that my love is altogether hopeless."

Gertrude would have spoken, but Cyril would not let her. "Hear me to the end," he said, gently. "For if you must refuse me again, I would have you understand something of the depth of this love you will have nothing to do with."

"Surely, surely, it must be only a passing fancy on your part, which you will soon forget," she says, in a low, hurried voice.

"You are not one to inspire only a passing fancy, Gertrude. A man light of love would not be attracted by you. You have but little of the coquette about you."

"I might as well have," she replied, bitterly. "What does it matter if I have deceived you, whether I did so intentionally or not?"

"It matters very much to me. The deception may be all my own; we are so anxious to believe what we really wish, that we are not quite honest with ourselves. If I did not know you incapable of coquetry, I would never ask you what I am going to ask now. It is not so very much, after all, Gertrude," he added, looking down into her face. "Not so very much, that I need fear a denial. What I wish you to do is to forget you ever refused me, and to go back to the old friendship. Heaven knows, I have drifted very far away from the old moorings. Don't think I will persecute you," he adds, quickly, seeing the look on her face, "with my love-making. I only ask the boon any stranger might have, of seeing you without constraint."

"Cyril," begins Gertrude, trying to speak steadily, and by no means succeeding, "I fear you will be greatly shocked when you find how very much you are deceived in me. I thought, until this evening, that you understood much more about me than you do; that, though I had not told you in so many words, I had so plainly hinted—"

He mistakes her hesitation, and thinks he can help her. "You mean to say you hinted that you did not love me. Must it be always impossible, Gertrude?"

"I mean to say," she answers, speaking very slowly, "that I am engaged."

"Engaged—" Cyril repeats the word as if not comprehending it.

"Yes, I am engaged to Cousin Geoffrey."

For a few moments there is silence. Gertrude never stirs, only her hand tightens its grasp painfully upon the branch which she is holding back against her breast—tightens, crushing together stem and stiff dark leaves and spicy yellow broom. The scent of the broom ever afterward brought back to her that silence with its breathless waiting, while she dare not look up to see in Cyril's face that which she fears to see there—the effect of her words. At last:

"Were you engaged when you came to Aunt Margaret?" he asks her.

"Yes, some time before."

She speaks rapidly then, as if in haste to get over her confession.

"I have been very blind," says Cyril, slowly, after another weary pause during which he never takes his eyes from her. "Not to Forbes's feeling. I saw well enough that he was in love with you, jealous of every one who came near you; but I never detected any stronger feeling on your part for him than a cousinly liking—a desire not to wound him, and perhaps to keep him in good humor. Charlotte did try to enlighten me a little, but then she so often sails by a false light that one is not apt to follow her."

Gertrude is silent. She has made her confession, and prefers not to dwell on it. What is there for her to say? A man must necessarily feel disgust when he finds the woman he is in love with already engaged to another. There is no use in her probing her love for Geoffrey, to prove its depth to Cyril. Her chief desire just now is to reach home. Indeed, she would have turned and walked away, if she had not feared to hurt Cyril, who, on the contrary, does not seem in the least inclined to move.

"Gertrude," he asks, presently, as if he had just awakened to the fact of her presence, "is there any reason for this engagement? Anything, I mean, besides the natural one of your caring for each other?"

"No other reason."

"No outside influence has been brought to bear upon you? It is not because of your uncle's wish?"

"Uncle Oliver was certainly pleased, but he never expressed any wish to me on the subject nor influenced me in any way."

"I know I have no right to question you, but I would like to know why you did not tell me of this at first when I spoke to you to-night?"

"Because what you told me took me by surprise. Besides, I could not bear to add anything just then to what I was forced to say. I ought to have told you when I first went to Mrs. Elliot's. Uncle Oliver wished it to be kept quiet, and—and Cousin Geoffrey seemed to think it would be best."

"Cousin Geoffrey," repeats Cyril, quickly. "Do not those two words prove to you, Gertrude, that you are under a delusion? Girls do not talk of cousins when they mean lovers. Take care that you do not sin against your heart, and vow an untruth in seeming kindness to Geoffrey Forbes. He would be the first to turn on you for the deception. When you are married—"

"It will be a long time before then," interrupted Gertrude, and then checking herself, she turns away silently.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

[Written expressly for *Godley's Lady's Book*.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ.

Authors of "Ingrémisco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER X.—CONTINUED.

Cyril comes to her side, but he never glances at her face as they go down the road to their inevitable separation. It is not until they reach the lawn-gate, that Gertrude says:

"Cyril, do you remember telling me just now not to be too sorry for you? Cannot you say the same to me again?"

"Not if the words imply I am not hurt. It is more bitter this time than before, for then I was scarcely hopeless. Now —. But even that is not so bitter as the knowledge that another has won you."

"If I had only been quite frank long ago, I might at least have made you my friend for life," Gertrude says, sorrowfully. "If we could go back to the old friendship—confess—" she breaks in upon herself, hurriedly—"you do not think as well of me as you did."

"We must not go back for other reasons. Geoffrey Forbes bars the way. I doubt if I could ever have been your friend. But I could have avoided you, and at least have spared you this dreary explanation. You must not blame yourself," he adds, gently. "You were in no way bound to tell me what every girl has a perfect right to keep secret. I told you I exonerate you from all coquetry. I might complain, perhaps, that your womanly tact might have hinted to you the difference on my part, between love and friendship: but your own feeling for Geoffrey Forbes may have blinded you to any other man's attentions."

Gertrude does not answer him at first. When

she does speak, it is timidly, almost beseechingly:

"There are dozens of worthier, better women in the world, who could make your life happier."

"I doubt that. Yet, I know what you feel. You cannot bear to think you have unwittingly wrecked a life. I will promise you to struggle against my love: on Forbes's account I ought, and no doubt your belonging to him may help me. But I can't promise to love another woman, were she twenty times more perfect than you are. To tell the truth, I don't care to love any one else." And then, looking into her quivering face,

"You are too tender-hearted," he says, trying to speak lightly. "Girls generally think it is a pleasant pastime to capture us. You must not take it so to heart."

Gertrude makes no answer. They have reached the house, but she shrinks back. "I can't go in just now," she says, hastily.

"I will say you are safe at home. God bless you, Gertrude," adds Cyril, for an instant taking both her hands in his. "If I have seemed for a moment to blame you, forget it, for in my heart I never have."

He goes into the house and leaves her out of doors. The windows of the study are open, and Gertrude can hear Charlotte question him as to what has become of her. Both her uncle's and Mr. Elliot's voices are quite distinct; Cyril is talking to them cheerfully. It seems to Gertrude, standing outside, listening, as if she had already passed out of his recollection. She does not hear Geoffrey's voice, and concludes he has gone home.

Gertrude does not go indoors, but goes away to the elm-tree, the broad shadow of which in the moonlight hides her completely. She sits upon the grass, regardless of its being damp with dew, and leaning her arms on the bench, she rests her face on them. Has she fallen asleep? or is she thinking?

If she is thinking, it is not of Cyril Elliot. She

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not striving to recall what he said to her; though she finds afterwards some words of his spoken that night, burnt into her memory past all obliteration. But she puts all thought of him aside just then, by saying it is the loss of Cyril's friendship which pains her so—not remembering that he told her she never possessed it, and that what she had prized was in reality his love. But even that, Gertrude is not thinking, as she sits there with her face buried out of sight.

Our revelations come to us without any effort on our part. It was in a trance that the Divine Apostle saw visions of heaven. It was in the quiet stillness of the night, when a deep sleep had fallen upon him, that the ghostly visitor haunted Eliphaz. It is there under the weird shadow of the elm, that Gertrude sees a vision of her future. She puts it away from her then with a shudder, and would have no faith in its reality. It is only when it came back to her again and again, that she begins to fear its truth, and to question whether she loves Geoffrey Forbes well enough to marry—

"Good heavens, Gertrude! Is anything the matter?"

It is Geoffrey's voice. He has nearly stumbled over her on his way to the gate.

"Nothing is the matter," she says, rising to her feet, and turning her face toward the house, in the contrary direction from that in which Geoffrey is going.

"I understood Elliot that you were tired and had gone to your room."

"I was tired and sat down here, I suppose—it is late, and time for me to be asleep," she replies, anxious to escape.

But Geoffrey is not inclined to permit that. His first surprise and anxiety at finding her there have died away. Why is she lingering out in the moonlight alone, after her walk with Cyril Elliot? Geoffrey's irritation is freely expressed in his voice as he says:

"If you will wait one moment, I have something to say to you."

Gertrude turns her face to him, without speaking. She has said she is tired, and any words jar on her just now; but she puts aside her impatience, and assumes an indifference by no means soothing to Geoffrey.

"I did hope, Gertrude," he goes on to say, "that you would not go back to your old habit of flirting with Elliot. It is culpable in any woman, and doubly so in one situated as you are."

Cyril's words that he exonerates her from all coquetry, flash back on Gertrude's memory. Why do these two men judge her so differently? Is not that love which does her no wrong the truest?

"It would be, as you say, culpable in me," she answers, quite calmly. "You have only to prove your assertion to convict me."

"I should think you would scarcely care to

invite the inquiry after loitering a good hour on the road with Elliot. He is unlike all other men if he does not flatter himself you are in love with him. It would not require an overstock of vanity on his part."

"He is entirely unlike most men, and I can vouch for his thinking nothing of the kind," replies Gertrude, hastily.

"Has he been opening his heart to you?" asks Geoffrey, half sneeringly, half suspiciously.

Gertrude makes no answer, but turns away and begins to walk towards the house.

"Stop, Gertrude," says Geoffrey, authoritatively. "I have a right to speak on this matter. If we do not understand each other now, we may make a failure in our future."

Gertrude has stopped, turning round, but not taking a step toward him.

"I suppose love of admiration is born in your sex," he goes on; "and if a man makes love to you, you deem it polite to listen to him. Yet you can scarcely expect me to be pleased, or to keep silence where I totally disapprove."

Geoffrey is angry, and is by no means weighing his words; indeed, he does not feel the full weight of them, until Gertrude's answer comes rapidly and passionately:

"Do you know what you are saying to me?—what you are accusing me of? What confidence can you possibly have in me, if you consider that I am open to every man's admiration, whether real or feigned? You could not have chosen a keener insult than your words imply."

"I did not mean them as such. Of course you have run away with what I said. If you tell me that you and Elliot have had a harmless walk, without love-making on his part, I will retract everything that I have said."

Gertrude makes no answer. She cannot bring herself to trust the man to whom she is engaged with the secret of the man she has refused to marry. If she did, Geoffrey might blame her as he generally manages to do in all doubtful questions, but he could not accuse her of enjoying the hour spent in the wood.

"You see, Gertrude, that I am right," says Geoffrey, finding that she is not inclined to answer him. "You can't deny that Elliot has been talking nonsense to you, and you did not rebuke him as you ought. If you had mentioned your engagement—"

"That is just what I did," she interrupts.

"It does not make any real difference, then, if he knows my claim on you," says Geoffrey, somewhat mollified by Gertrude's hasty confession. "Fortunately, Elliot goes away to-morrow, and I hope sincerely you will not meet him again until my name will be a protection against his impertinences, and cure in you all desire for moonlight rambles."

There is the briefest pause.

"Yes, he is going away to-morrow, and I shall not see him again for a long time, perhaps forever. Therefore, you cannot think I have any motive but the one I avow in saying that I am very weary of all this. For some reason, you manage to read wrong my simplest actions. It is disagreeable to me now; it will be far worse for us both hereafter. Therefore, it is better to end it whilst we can—better, I mean, to end our engagement."

She says it very quietly, standing where she had stopped at his bidding, just beyond the shadows of the elm, her face as still, as passionless, as pale, as the moonlight resting upon it. Such a calm may follow after a storm of emotion: but Gertrude had shown but one momentary flash of feeling throughout. If she is calm, however, so is not Geoffrey?

"Can you possibly mean that, Gertrude?" he asks, coming toward her. "Do you care so little for me, that you are willing to separate for a few angry words on my part? Cannot you understand that it is my great love for you, which makes me jealous, impatient of another man's attention? If I did not care how long you strolled in the moonlight with some one else, you would have a much better right to complain. But as I do feel it, it is natural that I am uneasy and irritable, and you should be the last person to blame me."

"I did not mean to blame you. Only, Cousin Geoffrey," she says, wearily, "it requires a stronger love than mine for you, to bear the constant strain you put upon it. It is far better we should part, before you shatter it altogether."

"Of course it would be better, if you do not love me, Gertrude; but ——"

"I did not say that," she interrupts; "only that you are too hard upon me, Cousin Geoffrey."

"But if I promise to be gentler in the future?" he asks, laying his hand on her shoulder as he speaks, as if fearful she would leave him at once.

She does not free herself from him, but says: "It is useless, it would be useless in you to try. Let me go, Cousin Geoffrey."

He thinks it best to take her literally, and so withdraws his grasp on her shoulder.

"You are right," he says, hurriedly. "It is too late for us to talk any longer. Pardon me, Gertrude, if I have been harsh or rude to you. You women should not be so rash as to make us love you. You almost madden us with jealousy, and then coolly shake your skirts in our face at our first rough word, and plead your womanhood."

"It is a poor argument, most of us find," answers Gertrude, bitterly.

"Not if you plead its weakness. Do not turn away, dear; I can't let you go until you tell me you forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," she says, coldly.

"Much, very much, if I have made you angry enough to threaten to leave me. Say that you

forgive me, Gertrude, if you wish to let me go home with a light heart."

Gertrude repeats the words almost mechanically, and is glad when a few minutes later Geoffrey leaves her. She is so weary of battling, so anxious to get away, that she never questions whether it is a miserable truce between them, or an end to all strife.

After all, it seemed but a small matter just then to Gertrude, whether her "future will copy fair her past." She has no materials at hand to weave something smoother and brighter, so what does it matter? There is always much recklessness in utter poverty, especially with those who, as the phrase terms it, have seen better days. It is when we grow used to dark days, that we learn the truth of the saw: "Better is bale by bale that followeth it."

Betty was in the act of locking the front door when she heard Gertrude's voice bidding her open.

"You here, Miss Gertrude? Why, they said you'd gone to bed a good hour ago. What have you been doing, getting your dress so draggled in the dew, and your face a deal whiter than the wall?"

"I have been under the elm-tree, talking to Cousin Geoffrey," explained Gertrude, briefly.

"Is that all? You look as if you'd been frightened by a goblin. Well, times are changed. It used to be talking to one's sweetheart in the moonlight gave girls red cheeks; but now it just makes ghosts of them," grumbles old Betty, as she locks the hall door.

CHAPTER XI.

"Nor take her tea without a stratagem."

"But you will come down for the partridge-shooting in the fall, Elliot?" said Mr. Oliver, cordially, to his parting guest.

Cyril could give no promise: his movements during the summer and autumn were very uncertain.

They were all standing round the breakfast-table, that next morning. The whole family had assembled to partake of the last meal with Cyril; even Mr. Oliver, who was apt to be late, and Charlotte, who was always so on principle, this morning only managing to get down as the others were finishing. Geoffrey usually came over while they were still at the table; but to-day he was late, perhaps wishing to avoid the confusion of Elliot's leave-taking.

Only Gertrude was lingering in her place at the table behind the coffee-urn. She did not care to join in the eager conversation round her. She was about to lose her friend, never perhaps to meet him again: and she had to be careful not to show so much as an ordinary regret. He had put

himself without the pale of her friendship: she could not follow him into that path outside, where he would fain lead her; and so they were to separate.

"Good-bye, Gertrude," he said, coming to her where she sat playing absently with the teaspoons. "To hear of your happiness will always be a comfort to me."

"Good-bye," returned Gertrude, holding out her hand.

She had lifted her eyes as he stood before her, but not quite to the level of his. Instead, they encountered Charlotte's; and though those innocent hazel orbs strayed at once toward Mr. Oliver, who was speaking, Gertrude's color, which had begun to waver, came back, steady, and somewhat heightened, as it had been all the morning. Still she did not lift her eyes to Cyril's, and so missed the look in his, which might have paled her cheek in spite of Charlotte's observation.

To Cyril, Charlotte's observation was a matter of indifference. He took that long farewell of Gertrude's face, because he well knew she would not glance up to be pained by its pain: but he spoke calmly, and only

"Held her hand but as long as all may—
Or so very little longer—"

For why should he trouble her?

And this was their parting. Geoffrey himself could not have felt aggrieved by the manner of it.

"We will be at home next week. Don't forget to tell the servants to expect us," said Mrs. Elliot, as a supplement to her leave-taking with Cyril.

Mr. Oliver protested against such a message; but Gertrude felt a vague sense of relief, through all the strange numbness in which she sat still there, while Charlotte followed Cyril into the porch. She could hear him speaking cheerfully to Charlotte outside, bantering her upon her many messages and numerous wants, which he warned her he would forget before he reached the lawn-gate, unless she made a memorandum of them. At last he was gone, and Charlotte came in to finish her breakfast.

"I cannot imagine why Cyril left to-day," she said, as she helped herself to an egg. "There was not the slightest reason why he should go—unless Mr. Forbes made himself disagreeable, which you must confess he can do effectually, if he chooses. It was not until Cyril bade us good-night, that he seemed to have decided upon going away to-day. I wonder you did not notice your cousin's satisfaction, when all Mr. Oliver's arguments failed to persuade Cyril to remain."

"You forget I was not in the room," answered Gertrude, who appeared engrossed in counting the spoons and piling them up one upon another.

"Do you know, I think that was the very reason Mr. Forbes was so provoking. If you had come in as usual, and had not stolen off to bed as

a naughty child might, he would not have thought so much of your loitering on the road with Cyril. The best way is to appear perfectly innocent of any intention of wrong-doing, and then it is difficult for one to convict you."

"It seems to me a much better way to consult one's own inclinations," returned Gertrude, coldly.

"Yes, if there is no one to make a fuss. Mr. Oliver feared you were not well; and Aunt Margaret rather suspected Cyril had said something disagreeable. Mr. Forbes was awfully cross. Altogether, Cyril was the only person present perfectly cool and indifferent."

"Present company is of course always an exception," said Gertrude, smiling.

"Oh, for myself, I had had a walk of more than a mile with your cousin, when he was not disposed to have my companionship. You may imagine I was too glad to get home to feel irritated at anything."

"My cousin would be flattered by your testimony," said Gertrude, smiling at the air with which Charlotte made this statement.

"I would not dare to give it to his face; not so much because it would not be civil, as that I would be afraid of him. Your courage is a perfect marvel to me, Gertrude."

"I did not know any opportunity had occurred to test my bravery," Gertrude replied.

"Jealousy is as cruel as the grave, the wisest of all wise men said once, and I am sure he ought to have known what he was talking about. It ought to have been your lot to have had Cyril for your fiancé; you might then walk till midnight in the moonlight with some other man, and his only fear would be lest you had no shawl, and might take cold. I will say, however, that if one is not constitutionally timid, it must be good sport to rouse a man's jealousy. It is like the famous bull-fights in Spain. A little cruel, perhaps, to goad on the poor creature to madness; but if one is properly protected, there must be a deal of excitement. But certainly a sport not to be gotten out of Cyril."

"Cyril would not care for a girl in whom he had not perfect confidence," said Gertrude, with some unconscious emphasis.

"He has never been deceived as yet by one of us. But he is just one of those whom such an experience would cure, and make indifferent at once."

Gertrude was silent. Her hands clasped on the edge of the table tightened a little; that was all.

"I never knew Cyril to have more than one intimate friend," Charlotte went on to say, as she placidly sifted cinnamon and sugar over her waffle. "He was like a brother to him, and a kinder brother than Cyril: one could not imagine. But one day he had reason to suspect his friend; a little more than suspect, for he discovered he had

use their intimacy for the pecuniary advantage it gave him. Cyril made no complaint, but signed a much larger cheque than even a generous man might have considered liberal, and no one ever heard him mention his friend afterwards. A man who could act in that way would find no excuse for a woman who deceived him, though he would never make a complaint."

"I suppose it would depend entirely upon whether she intentionally deceived him or not," returned Gertrude, thoughtfully.

"I don't think Cyril would be nice in weighing motives. Men seldom are, if you wound their self-love. Besides, the experience I just spoke of, has no doubt made him intolerant. If you offered Cyril your friendship, ten to one he would refuse it."

With a quick, impatient motion, Gertrude pushed aside the spoons she had been toying with, and the blood mounted to her brow. Certainly, it must have been a recollection which caused the blush; for Charlotte's remark could not have done so.

"Confess, Gertrude, that Cyril has refused your friendship," said Charlotte, teasingly.

"I confess I would much rather give you a cup of coffee than talk nonsense."

"Mr. Forbes would not agree with you in calling it nonsense, if you blush so furiously about it. No more coffee, thank you"—for Gertrude had stretched out her hand for the cup. "Ah, there come the letters. One only begins to appreciate *mails* of either kind, when one is in the country. Is that an excusing clause for a very bad pun? Aunt Margaret has always said that in the country all the material for heads runs to wheat: though of course on tobacco lands it is different. For me, Gertrude?" as Gertrude, having sorted the letters in piles, chiefly for Mr. Oliver, sent Charlotte round hers: reserving a magazine for herself, and dismissing the servant with Mrs. Elliot's and Mr. Oliver's share, where their voices are heard upon the porch.

Charlotte's two letters are postmarked, the one from little Medlington, the other from Baltimore. It is the seal of the latter she breaks first—an ingenious, unreadable monogram, promising much society gossip behind it. Before she has come to the end of the last closely-written page, Gertrude had succeeded in forcing her thoughts into her magazine, at her end of the table, from which the servant has noiselessly removed the breakfast. So that when Charlotte comes to the home-letter, she is unobserved.

Not that she cares for that, as she tears open the plain white envelope: but when she reads a line or two she does. She lifts up a hurried, startled glance: then, re-assured by Gertrude's bent head, returns to her own reading, with a troubled line upon her brow, and a painful contraction of the delicate nostrils. One could see

that she is keeping herself in a strong tension, which does not suffer the letter she holds to give a tell-tale rustle, though her free hand on her lap trembles like a leaf.

Gertrude never looks up, until, after a long pause, during which Charlotte's eyes have been fixed on the last blank half-page of her letter, Charlotte pushes her chair back and rises.

Then Gertrude gives a startled glance at her face.

"Dear Charlotte, you have no bad news, I trust?" she says, impulsively.

There is a slight quiver of the girl's lip, at the tone of real concern in Gertrude's voice. "Come out with me, Gertrude—I must tell Aunt Margaret," she says; and passes out swiftly through the long window, to the porch.

Gertrude follows: if not in time for Charlotte's low, quietly-spoken words, for Mrs. Elliot's repetition of them:

"Your father ill? Paralysis?"

"Only a slight attack," says Charlotte, calmly. "But of course they want me at home, Aunt Margaret."

Mrs. Elliot glances toward the letter; but Charlotte, instead of offering it to her, is crumpling it in her hand, as she adds:

"Margaret writes in such haste, she is hardly legible or coherent. She says the doctor has just been in again, and pronounces the danger over from this attack. But papa is much shaken by it, and Margaret says it would be a comfort to have me. I think I must ask you to let me go to-day, Aunt Margaret, if Mr. Oliver will be so kind as to send me to the train."

"My dear Charlotte, if your papa is better already, surely there need be no such haste. It is very—"

"Provoking," she might have added, but chances to catch Mr. Oliver's eye, and with a little flush changes the epithet.

"—Sad, certainly. Well, my dear, we will go, as you say: and it will be better that I should be in Baltimore, within reach, if I could be of any use. I only hope Cyril will go at once to the house, that the servants may have begun to prepare for us. Let me see: let me see: we must know about the trains."

Mr. Oliver has brought his newspaper forward, with real concern in his face; while Gertrude lays a gentle hand on Charlotte's arm as she is turning away.

"You must let me help you, Charlotte; let me pack for you."

"After a little, Gertrude. Come to me after a little while; not yet."

When Charlotte is safe in the solitude of her own room, she smoothes out her crumpled letter carefully upon her knee. But it is to no account of her father's illness that she turns with that sudden shivering relaxing of the tension she has

been holding herself in ; it is not on her father's name that her frightened eyes are fixed ; but there where Margaret's hurried hand had begun :

"Elliot"—

* * * * *

That evening, when Gertrude stood on the porch-step watching the carriage drive off with her two guests, it was with a pang, instead of the feeling of relief she had expected. It was as if the brightest part of her life had vanished, and only a painful memory was left to her. The boast she had made to Geoffrey had proven a foolish one. She could not live over her life at Mrs. Elliot's with anything but pain.

Mr. Oliver missed his guests—or rather, he missed Mrs. Elliot. He turned with an effort to find companionship once more in his books, complaining that his sight was failing, and that the weather was growing warm for reading. Gertrude spent much of the day in reading to her uncle, whilst Geoffrey, on his part, grumbled at having so little of her time, and wished Mrs. Elliot back again.

Betty alone was glad to get rid of the visitors. She took great pleasure in piling up pillows and blankets on the denuded beds, and in making the rooms Mrs. Elliot and Charlotte had occupied look uninhabitable and dreary. "Please heaven, we'll go back to the old, quiet way of living," she said, piously. "We'll have less noise, now that the key is turned in the piano, and the parlor windows are bowed in. Mr. Geoffrey may not like a quiet house, but the rest of us can do without music until we get harps of our own ; and we'll not murmur at having to wait a bit for them."

It is not intended for mortals to walk backwards, so, notwithstanding Betty's pious wish, none of the household went back to the old life, but forward into a new one, full of new experiences.

CHAPTER XII.

"The old thorns shall grow out of the old stem."

"Our box, please."

The crowd about the door of the post office had just scattered, after the dispensing of the evening mail, when Elliot came in. There was one letter in the box which the postmaster's helpmeet thought needful to scrutinize as she handed it somewhat lingeringly to Elliot.

"It's for Mrs. Burger, Miss Elliot. We did not know exactly where to forward it, but I suppose you would."

Elliot wondered idly over the letter as she came out into the May sunset. The same Elliot of a year ago ; an inch taller, perhaps, but having outgrown in no other way the child whom Delphine, on her wedding-day, had left standing on the threshold of womanhood, not taking the one step

across into it. So all those who knew the girl best would have said, an inch taller, that is all ; or, a fuller curve to the willowy figure, a lighter grace to the swift movements, a deeper meaning in the dark eyes looking out of a face startling one with its glowing beauty. The same Elliot—

Was it the same ?

The girl herself was conscious of no change. At first she had been. That night with the dying woman—Delphine's secret—the burnt letters—had haunted her like a terrible, confused dream ; from which one awakes yet cannot free one's self. But gradually the horror of it had worn away. The whole was as apart from her daily life and as unreal as a midnight vision ; nothing had come of it ; Delphine was safe ; and in her absolute inexperience, the girl had no more realization than a child of results beyond her view. And so she had gone on, the dominating horror of that night fading away more and more.

There was no recollection of it now, as she came lightly out into the May sunset, wondering idly over the letter. Who in the world could be directing to Delphine here, when all her friends must know she has been in Europe this whole year ! Or, could it—could it possibly be that any one had heard that Delphine was coming home ?

As this hope flashed on her, her heart gave a great bound, then sank as suddenly. For she had looked more closely at the envelope, and it shook in her hands. She stole a glance around ; she had crossed by the churchyard wall, and there was no other passenger along that whole linden-shaded side-walk ; so with furtive, hurried fingers, she tore open the shabby envelope with its Baltimore post mark, and its ill-written, hardly decipherable superscription.

"For Delphine ? Nay, not for Delphine—never for Delphine's innocent eyes," said Elliot, breathlessly to herself, and bent her own eyes full of guilty fear, upon the scrawl.

So ill-written, so ill-spelled, and in such ungrammatical German idiom, that she had but barely arrived at the drift of the single page, when she heard a quick, firm step behind her.

Some one had caught sight of the tall young figure crossing the sunset light. No one need see Elliot's face to recognize her, who had ever seen her walk. Dr. Kearney once told Kate that the girl's movements had a dreamy fascination in them, like watching breeze-lifted willow-boughs—no twinkling stir, no dash, no hurry : but a rhythmic swaying full of repose, even when most swift and sudden. So she had just time to thrust the letter crumpled together into her pocket before Doctor Kearney overtook her.

"I saw you coming out of the post-office, Miss Elliot," (he was a little surprised to observe how the girl started, and how the color flamed into her face, then died away) "and hastened after you to tell you that your father is not well, and

kept very quiet. He has had a—slight attack. I left him comfortable just now; but as your sisters were not at home I thought it better to warn you. Your sisters will be at home soon, I suppose? I think Hussy said they had gone over to town and would be back in the nine o'clock train?"

Elliot looked up at him blankly. She heard literally not one word he said. Those strange words of the letter in her pocket were ringing over and over in her brain; she could not all at once give her attention to any others. For what did any others matter to her, after those?

Doctor Kearney thought he had alarmed her. He hastened to reassure her:

"You must not be frightened: it is not so serious. It is only to keep him, your father, from all excitement: and your sisters will soon be with you. They are coming over in the nine o'clock train," he repeated.

"Yes," said Elliot, forcing herself back to the every-day life, out of that glimpse of another life which the letter had given her. "Margaret had some shopping for the house, and Kate and May went with her. They will certainly be back."

"Then I will meet them at the train." Dr. Kearney lifted his hat and turned up the corner of the street, which they had now reached. "Remember, Miss Elliot, you are not to be in the least alarmed; you have only to keep your father quiet."

Elliot stood still and looked after him as he went. What could he mean? alarmed?—and keeping quiet? Her hand stole in a frightened way into her pocket, closing on that letter. Could he know?—could he have seen?—

But that was utterly impossible. Even in the panic which seized her, she was conscious that that secret was absolutely her own. The ghost of a smile crossed her lips, into which the color did not come back. Absurd in Dr. Kearney to imagine she could be anxious about the girls, though they should arrive after night-fall; one might know he was not a Medlingtonian, and could not get used to the customs of the village, where any lady could go alone from one end to the other, much later than nine o'clock, and find every man on the side-walk move respectfully to let her pass. And then her thoughts quitted Dr. Kearney, and his baseless anxieties, and went abruptly back to the real, the bitter, the remorseful ones pressed upon her by the letter.

She did not need to read it over again; the meaning of it was an arrow still rankling within her, for all she set her lips tight against all outcry. But something must be done—something—

If she had but some money! Would any price be too great to buy Delphine's peace?

And she had but a paltry five dollars in her purse; five dollars, which but yesterday she had thought quite a large sum when Margaret counted

it out to her, and told her that she must manage to get her summer hat with Kate's help as family milliner. How long ago that was! Five dollars. What were they with this great want staring her in the face?

Margaret would spare her nothing from the slender house-keeping fund, which moreover came so irregularly. Or, if she did spare anything, would she not demand a strict account of how and when and why Elliot would spend it?

Her father—. He certainly would ask for no account. But almost as certainly, he would find only a handful of loose change in his pockets, and would pooh-pooh the idea that a girl could want more. But she would go to him. Some other larger means must be devised afterwards; but for the pressing present she will go to him.

She reached the house as she arrived at this conclusion; and meeting no one as she entered, she went at once to the library, where, if her father were at home, she would find him at this hour.

There was no lamp burning there in the dusk, as she opened the door; but enough gray light still came in at the window to point out her father sitting against it in his easy-chair. How wan the gray light made him, and with what a strange helpless droop his head leant back against the shabby dark velvet which threw into sharpened relief his eagle-like profile. His alert, wiry figure looked shrunken and bent, and his hands lay with that same helpless droop, on either arm of the chair. But Elliot took no note of anything unusual. She was always too intent upon her purpose, whatever that might be, to be observant. And she went forward, yet not advancing out of the shadow, which she felt to be a screen, and said, abruptly:

"Papa, I want some money—a great deal of money; just as much as you can give me."

Could he be asleep? He neither spoke nor stirred. And yet his eyes were open. The girl grew impatient in her urgent need.

"Papa, you won't refuse? I never came to you before, as the other girls do. Papa, *why* won't you answer me?"

She stood before him, clasping and unclasping her hands restlessly, quivering in her anxiety, striving to keep that quiver out of her shrilling voice.

"Papa, you won't refuse?"

He did not turn to look at her even now. He did not move, but said in an odd, muffled way:

"No, no, not refuse. You must not refuse such an eligible offer as that; my girls must marry rich men."

"Papa, are you dreaming?" She goes up to him and puts her hand impatiently upon his arm. "It is *your* money I want. No one else will give me any. But you will?"

He answers her in the same way:

"You see I have no money for you, child; and you like all the pretty dainty things money can surround you with. He will give them to you; he can be trusted to take care of you; you will be safe and happy with him. Delphine—"

Had his mind gone back to her? But Elliot does not understand. She breaks in bitterly:

"I don't know what man you are talking of, papa. You must be taking me in the dusk for one of the other girls; you can't know it is I, Elliot. Nobody wants to buy *me*. But oh, papa, take care what you are doing. You don't know the harm—"

"My girls must all marry rich men. Delphine—"

"Delphine!"

It is then that Elliot flashes out.

She does not know the wild, the bitter, scornful words she pours forth volubly. She, the silent, dreamy, reserved child, transformed all at once into the demon prophetess, for that name, Delphine, has inspired her. She keeps it back from her lips, it is true; guards it in her inmost heart, hid there from comment; but it is Delphine's unspoken wrongs which goad her into speech—speech so hurried, so breathless and defiant, that it is not until it has spent its force, and she pauses, out of breath, that she can heed her hearer.

Then she looks at him.

But has he heard?

His head leant back against the chair; his chin fallen; his features strangely pinched and eyes fixed with a wide and vacant stare; his face shrunken; and his outstretched hand still lying helplessly.

The girl has dropped down on her knees before him.

"Oh papa, papa, forgive!"

But there comes no answer into the set face.

Elliot's wild shriek finds out old Hussy in her distant kitchen, and brings her hurrying into the library. She gives one glance into her master's upturned face; she lifts his passive wrist, and listens for one instant to his stertorous breathing, then hastens away with a word to Elliot, which the girl motionless upon the floor before her father, a kneeling figure turned to stone, hears nothing of.

It is the doctor for whom Hussy has gone to send the nearest neighbor, and then hurries back, to share the watch with Elliot.

She has tried to lift the girl up from her knees, to place her on the chair close by. But Elliot does not heed: she is a dead-weight the old woman's feeble strength cannot cope with, and so Hussy lets her alone after an effort or two. It is not many minutes, after all: for Doctor Kearney had taken care not to be out of the way, and very soon he was beside the stricken man.

Just a word or two Elliot caught as the doctor stood an instant looking down upon his patient.

It was in an undertone; but the girl's senses, sharpened by terror, caught it. He was speaking apart to Hussy:

"I warned you this might happen unless you kept him perfectly quiet. Have you done so?"

"Indeed have I, doctor. There's not been a soul in but Miss Elliot."

Hussy and the doctor were lifting the helpless man to the sofa. Elliot crept away and crouched down by its foot; she dared not look into his face—the face of her father whom her wicked words had killed.

The doctor was as powerless with her as with his patient. There was little to do with either but to wait. To wait in the awful stillness, only broken by the patient's strange metallic breathing—never once by sigh, or stir, or questioning word from the young creature crouched down at the sofa's foot, with dark, dry eyes gazing out just as blankly into vacancy as even were the stricken father's.

But when Doctor Kearney had gone away to the railway station to meet the nine o'clock train, and had brought the sisters back with him, there came some change.

There was a wild burst of agony and sobbing down in the hall, from Kate and May, when Doctor Kearney broke to them there, how their father had been twice stricken with paralysis, first slightly in the street, and afterward more dangerously at home. A childish fit of crying from little May, as she threw herself on the hall sofa, hiding her face in the cushion; deep-drawn, heart-breaking sobs from Kate, as she stood looking up at Doctor Kearney through blinding tears, while he told all he had to tell; and watching that poor quivering face, shrank from his own needful words as if they were blows that smote himself.

He had forgotten Margaret standing in the background, until, as he ended, she went swiftly and quietly past him up the stairs.

She had already laid off her hat and gloves on the hall table. "You will come up and tell me exactly what is to be done, Doctor Kearney; I shall send Hussy down to poor little May," she said, as she passed him, speaking steadily, if hoarsely.

Doctor Kearney followed her with some relief, though with a backward glance toward Kate. He can depend on Margaret as a nurse, he sees; and he says to himself that it is as well, for practical purposes, that some women are just a little insensible by constitution.

Upstairs there, Margaret, after a moment, had gone from her father to Elliot, had put her arm about her, and with a quiet authority to which the girl was accustomed to yield, had drawn her to her feet, and led her from the room. She took her to her own chamber, and made her lie down in Delphine's empty place upon the bed, with an

that some thought of Delphine must come to her there.

If she had known what thoughts of Delphine would throng on her!

But Margaret knew of none but tender, soothing memories of her—such as might break up the frozen look in the twin sister's eyes.

"Lie still, dear Elliot—poor Elliot. If there comes any change I will send for you."

Margaret was not of those women in whom soft caresses are the natural expression of the feelings within them. Reserved, and used to shutting up her thoughts fold within fold in her inmost heart, she was wont to show so little of them, that were it not for that blush-rose face of hers, many an outside observer might have called her cold and hard. Even now she had no means of expressing the strong love and pity throbbing within her. She smoothed the pillow gently for her younger sister's head, and went back to her place at her father's side. But if it had been Delphine, with her tender, impulsive ways!—

Margaret went quietly back to her watch, joined after awhile by Kate, who had wept out the first vehemence of her grief, and now stole in to take, with a grateful lifting of her wet eyes, the chair Dr. Kearney silently set for her beside her sister's.

So the hours wore away—in solemn quiet in the library—in a thronged horror of terrible thoughts in that still chamber, where lay Elliot, and hid her face in Delphine's pillow.

Until, far on in the night, her door was softly opened, Elliot did not move. She lay hardly daring to breathe, her very heart-beats stilled with dread. For what tidings may not that messenger be bringing?

"All in the dark, Elliot?" It was Margaret's voice trying to speak cheerfully. "Did your lamp burn out? Papa is—better," with something very like a sob.

Elliot started up to a sitting posture; she stretched and grasped Margaret's arm in the dark.

"Better? Do you mean he does not suffer any longer—he is dead?"

The hearer shivered at those low awe-struck words.

"No, no—God forbid!" she cried out hastily. "He lives—he will live for us to take care of him, to love him, to be good to him. Elliot, I don't know why I should keep it from you, when at the first glance you would know—"

"Would know?"

No wonder the brave elder sister's courage failed her for the moment. But she braced herself to answer, to the strained and frightened ring of those two repeated words.

"That he is changed. He cannot be the same, after that stroke. Dear Elliot, if he should be a little helpless, and a little—weak—how we will help him and be strong for him."

She, too, was sitting on the edge of the bed now, and she had put out her hands graspingly in the dark, and taken Elliot's. But they were wrested from her. Elliot had started to her feet.

"Come with me to him, Margaret; I must see him."

"If you can be very quiet, Elliot. I would not let May come in to-night. Don't you think you had better wait until to-morrow? You are not really needed."

"Are you coming with me, Margaret?"

The quiet resolution of the tone was such as Margaret had never heard from this younger sister of hers before. She rose and followed her without a word out into the lighted upper hall, and downstairs to the library. At that door Elliot paused, and Margaret once more took the lead.

Noiselessly she opened the door, but not without a swift inquiring glance at Elliot. Yes, she might come in. Even in the half light there was something unmistakable in the resolute poise of the small, dark head, in the firm set of the short upper lip. Margaret looked, and knew that Elliot was no longer child, but woman.

They passed quietly, and stood beside the sofa where Mr. Burnley still lay, the doctor not having thought proper to disturb him when he had fallen into a gentle sleep after that strange death in life.

He had awakened once before Margaret went to Elliot, and had looked about him in a half recognizing way, with some faint rambling words which Margaret had not needed that Doctor Kearney should explain to her. But Kate had looked up at him in frightened appeal, and Margaret had presently after taken occasion to draw him aside to say:

"Tell me the whole truth, Doctor Kearney. Is it but a temporary wandering? or is this what we have to look for—this?"

It was; and so he had told the calm, quiet young woman who fulfilled his expectation of behaving in a common-sense way. It was what they had to look for, at least for the present; but in time, it might be hoped—

Margaret had turned away, back to her father's side, and then after a little had remembered Elliot.

They came in now together, and Elliot's dilated eyes took in the whole truth of the scene at once, in sharp lines of pain that sunk into her heart. The twilight room with its turned-down lamp and the low, flickering fire on the hearth, and weird shadows lurking in the deep recesses; the table strewn with papers where her father had lain then down that morning; the great easy chair, with the dent of his head in the worn cushions; Kate pale and still on her low seat beside the sofa, holding her father's hand, which, in one of its aimless, grasping movements, had found and been tenderly taken in hers. And on the pillows—

Doctor Kearney, who had been administering

something in a glass to the patient, moved aside on the girl's entrance, and Margaret stood back a little for Elliot to approach. And just then the father opened his eyes full on Elliot.

One long look from each pair of dark eyes, so like each other in form and color, yet always charged with meanings so utterly different. There is little enough meaning in his now. They wander vaguely from her yearning, imploring gaze, then wander back as aimlessly.

And then some subtle chord of memory is touched. He murmurs something, looking up full though vacantly into the girl's face.

Murmurs it once and again, until the gray lips, puffing for words, speak them at last with muffled utterance and they all hear.

"My girls must all marry rich men—"

Kate starts so violently that the passive hand falls from her hold, and Doctor Kearney, withdrawn apart, yet standing where he still can watch her profile, sees how the blood flames up to her very temples. Margaret comes swiftly forward, putting Elliot aside, kneeling down there before her father, stooping her white lips close to his sunken cheek; yet speaking her answer aloud lest he might miss it and so not be soothed.

"Yes, papa. Dear papa, we will never do anything to displease you."

Doctor Kearney turned aside and put up his hand to hide the smile just curling his lip. Probably there were not a few of such self-sacrificing daughters, who would marry their rich husbands rather than displease papa.

But Elliot had slunk out of the room.

* * * * *

When the last shade of night was merging imperceptibly into the first gray tint of dawn, a slight dark figure hurried unseen through the deserted village street. On, under the glooming side-walk trees, where only here and there a light glimmered from an upper window like a lingering star in a world of cloud. But they were not friendly lights to Elliot; she glanced up at them fearfully, and hurried on the faster.

Out, now, on the lonelier road. Less dark there, but for all that, less dread of being recognized and stopped. The stars up yonder are no spies, such as the village lights winking overhead among the branches might have proved; but shine in friendly wise to show her way.

A white, straight way, between low lying meadows, laced with silver when the dykes let the river tide creep in to and fro. Elliot hastens along, trembling at the loneliness in which the far-off river's moan makes itself heard. It is easy enough, after all, to see how the world sprang into being as the embodied thought of the Great Creator, for even to His poor human creatures it forms itself anew responsive to their moods. To Elliot, the silver interlacing of the dykes glitters like a cruel net spread for unwary feet; and when

she looks up across the meadows, across the moaning river, the moon is turning ghastly in the pallid sky, and the white morning-star, almost within its arm, is palpitating with strange fluttering throbs, struggling for life and place a moment more, until the gray dawn blots it out.

Her eyes are full of haggard dread, and she is shivering, and when the sun gleams out, a great fiery ball, beneath the fringing of trees on the horizon, and flashes its red glance across the river, it is like a great cruel eye staring at her, tracking her out, and she falls to trembling again; trembling yet more when round some turn in the hedge-row, she comes upon a farm-house standing back among its trees, and the barking of the watch-dog threatens her with discovery.

But what danger now can discovery have for her?—a quiet figure moving steadily on through the early morning, till the shadows lighten, and the smoke of the city to which she is hastening hangs like mist upon its hillside, blending in soft purpling shades the incongruous masses of red brick, green fields, and wooded hollows, and flushing or shining golden as it floats with sunrise clouds over the spires, and moves with those clouds in mother-of-pearl gleams across the windings of the two small streams which gird the city in before they meet, and glide on, on, to the great river where they lose themselves. Over the draw-bridge which spans one of these, the girl is passing now, letting her arm fall wearily with the traveling satchel she has carried all the way. Upon the other side, a railroad stretches its black length along: and it is towards it that Elliot turns her steps.

CHAPTER XIII.

"We parted.

Parted. Face no more,

Voice no more, love no more. Wiped wholly out."

"Well, girls"—

Charlotte has been standing in the doorway opening on the piazza, for full five minutes before she breaks the silence and reveals herself with those two words. She has had time to take in all the scene before her: the old man, the centre of it, leaning back half dozing in his easy chair; little May edged on his footstool, her sunny head bent over the lesson book on her knee, from which she is conning half audibly and wholly discontentedly, her "j' aime, tu aimes"—the desultory Burnley home-education having proceeded no farther than that. On the porch steps, under the trailing white-rose boughs, Margaret and Kate are seated, their work baskets between them, each hemming away at opposite ends of a family table-cloth. The scene is a common one enough for the Burnley domicile; yet there is an air about it which strikes even so rare a visitor as Charlotte as unfamiliar to it. Little May is left to the pursuit of

knowledge interrupted by any light running commentary or cheery demand for service on her father's part; and the two girls bend over their work with unremitting industry, and no gay chatter or hummed snatches of song—Kate not even looking up when a ruder freak of the May breeze flings a rose branch down at her, but merely laying down her work on her knee, with an unconscious sigh, and putting up both hands to disentangle her braids. A little below her, leaning on his arm upon the steps, and rather covertly possessing himself of the thorny twig which Kate has impatiently broken off and tossed aside, is some one whom Charlotte has not seen, as she comes forward with that:

"Well, girls."

The scene shifts at once, of course. May is the first to spring up, glad enough of any change, and embracing it enthusiastically in the shape of Charlotte. And then Kate and Margaret are about her, each with that closer clinging together which trouble brings. Charlotte does not heed that her pretty little French traveling hat is pushed rather askew, and ruff and cravat are in some danger from the vehemence of the greeting. Tears are in her eyes when she disengages herself, straightening her hat, and goes forward to her father's chair, stooping over, and laying on the bowed white head a kiss so light that it does not rouse him.

"He does not look so very much changed, girls?" she says, as she draws back, and speaks in an awed, questioning whisper.

"No—oh, no!" they both answer together, so eagerly that they must mean to reassure themselves as well.

"Doctor Kearney thinks?"—adds Kate.

And then she remembers the doctor, who is standing in the background, on the steps, having given one moment of consideration to escape, which is barred by the group in the doorway. "This is Doctor Kearney, Charlotte."

Charlotte turns, between surprise and annoyance at the intrusion; but her first glance recognizes in him a fellow-citizen with herself of that narrow world of hers; and she gives him a gracious bow and smile. As for Doctor Kearney, his face wears the puzzled expression a man's might, who should suddenly come upon a spray of French artificial flowers trailing from a wild rose-bush in a hedge-row. The one-sided introduction leaves him doubtful whether he must perforce take her to be a branch of the somewhat hap-hazard Burnley stem.

Perhaps he is a little hap-hazard in his own tastes, and of Ben Jonson's turn of mind: for it is to Kate that he comes forward, as he says something about the prescription he must write for Mr. Burnley.

Kate goes in to find him a bit of paper, and stands waiting quietly beside him, while he uses

the window-frame as a desk. As for Charlotte, she has moved away down the steps, and under the roses with Margaret; having first rid herself of little May, by sending her to Hussy, a willing messenger, to watch for the arrival of Charlotte's portemanteau on the yellow omnibus, and to beg to be allowed to help in preparing something by way of luncheon for the traveler.

"And now that I have you to myself at last, Margaret, tell me what is all this about Elliot?"

Charlotte says it, taking off her gloves, and laying down her hat upon the shaded garden-bench beside her. She is drawing out the creases which might mar those marvelously-fitting gloves; but there is a troubled line on her smooth brow, which shows that her thoughts are not entirely given up to that occupation. Margaret is not heeding the occupation, but the line, and says impulsively:

"Oh Charlotte, I am so sorry that trouble must come to you too! I hated to send for you to break up your happy life."

"Oh, as to that," says Charlotte with a lifting of the penciled brows. "I don't know that it was particularly happy; most things have a great deal of bother in them; and to tell the truth, I hardly cared to stay longer in the dull old country place. "But Elliot?"

"I have been longing for you, Charlotte. You know so much more of the world than we; you could tell better what to do. See, this is the note I found on my desk in my room, in the morning, when I went in there, after sitting up all night in the library with papa—it must have been as late as eight or nine o'clock, for Dr. Kearney had been away and back again. Her door was locked, and I only got in through the window next mine, on the porch-roof, you know. Her bed had not been disturbed—she had been lying on the outside in Delphine's place, hours before, when I went in to bring her to papa—and nothing about the room looked hurried or disarranged. Yet I missed her new spring suit out of her wardrobe, and her cashmere which was left over quite good from the winter; and she must have crammed half of her underclothing into the large satchel, which was missing too. And that is everything we know. As to where she went and how, we could not find one clue. But the note, Charlotte."

Charlotte had been sitting with it in her hand, looking at Margaret, not at it, of the contents of which Margaret had already written her a summary in that letter received at Broomielaw. There have been no developments since then. So she opens it slowly, and reads:

"I cannot bear it, Margaret, and so I am going away. It is my fault, that second attack came on. If I had left him quiet, if I had not dared to speak to him as I did—

"But it is no use to think of that now. Only, you must not be frightened for me—I have some

money of my own, and the set of amethysts and the pearl ring which you let me choose, when papa told you to divide mamma's jewelry among us—they will be worth a good deal, and mamma would not mind my parting with them, if she knew why. And I know how to take care of myself—I have a plan. If only you would not all be too worried about me, I would believe that my only chance of any comfort is to go away. You need not fear that I will not take care of myself, that I will be reckless—no, for I have one thing to do, one thing I am determined to live for, and I shall not lose courage. Only one thing, Margaret—dear Margaret, if you ever loved me you will promise me this: not to write to Delphine anything about my going away—to wait until she comes home, and has to know. Things may be different then. Margaret, this is all I ask of you, all you can do—you will, you will do this for

ELLIOT."

As Charlotte turned back, and read the closely written page again, more slowly this time. It was evident she could make nothing of it. She let her hand fall with the letter in her lap, and sat there in silence for some long moments, during which Margaret leaned back with a sigh, watching her downcast face with the faint gleam of hope dying out of her own. Somehow, she had been clinging to the idea that the worldly-wise sister would know what to do.

As that hope faded out, she turned her eyes blankly away, to the porch where the father sat helplessly dozing among the roses; to the window whence came the hum of Dr. Kearney's voice speaking to Kate—he was not talking of Elliot. And then she caught sight of the little brown wren for which Elliot had been used to scatter crumbs on the porch-steps, and which now peered over the threshold of its house in the eaves, and ventured down to those crumbless steps with a low twitter. Charlotte would have seen nothing in that, but the tears well up into Margaret's eyes and she turns her head aside, as Charlotte says, her thoughtful gaze still on the ground:

"Of course, there is no man in the question; at least I don't suppose there is."

"Charlotte! Why, Elliot does not say one word of that. And besides, she is such a child."

"She is just our married sister's age," says Charlotte, dryly. "And childish as this letter is, in one way, it certainly does not strike me as altogether so."

"She had always seemed so much less womanly than Delphine—though I confess that night—but Charlotte, she never would have written such a letter as that, if, as you say, there had been a man in the question."

"My dear child, I did not say there was; you need not be indignant. I really don't believe in it in the least. Only, you know, when a girl runs away, one naturally thinks of a man; and the

letter's not mentioning one, does not argue another way or the other. But I only threw out the mere suggestion, because I could not think of any other. If she had not written that about not letting Delphine know, I should have thought the child might be trying to get to her. But as that is out of the question—Has she any friend, Margaret, that she would be likely to put any confidence in? anything she would get up a craze about, in the way of a duty or a work? She speaks as if she had something to do, some plan."

"She has never had any friend in her life but Delphine. Delphine's companionship has been all she has ever wanted. You have been able to be so little at home, Charlotte, that perhaps you do not quite understand how it was with Elliot and Delphine from little children. Looking back now, I don't think Delphine understood it herself. She loves Elliot as she loves us all, but she was inclined to make Kate and me her companions, for Elliot grew up too slowly for her. Besides, their tastes were different, and, though Elliot would throw down her books at any time for Delphine, she would not really come out of them. Sometimes, lately, I am afraid we did not any of us understand Elliot; not that she was unhappy at home—I am sure she was not unhappy—" she interrupts herself, eagerly. "She just did as she pleased; since Delphine went away she has had no one to tease her away from her books."

"And Delphine has been away a year, I see," says Charlotte, dryly. "But what could you have expected, Margaret, but that the child should grow morbid and queer, and should rush off into some wild undertaking?"

Margaret sits with blanched face turned aside. She makes no self-defence; she does not attempt to excuse herself by a hint of the weight of family cares on her young, untaught hands, that know so little how to deal with them. She says nothing to share Charlotte's blame with Kate, with the father, even with Charlotte herself, who had slipped so easily out of the elder sister's place. Nor does she let one outcry of her own secret sorrow pass her lips, though the pain of it had often stunned her to the life passing round her. "If Roger had been here, he would have known—" she says to herself, with that far-away look in her eyes, as of one gazing out hopelessly over blank, distant seas. And then with a start she comes back to the present.

"I can't think Elliot has rushed off into any such undertaking as you say, Charlotte. She is the last girl in the world to get up any odd ideas about work—she, dreaming over her books and papers from morning until night. I don't read the letter in that way, though I did at the first glance. I think she means to stay away, to expiate somehow the wrong she fancies she has done papa. And the worst of it, as I wrote you, is that

she has fled, believing herself so guilty, when, as Doctor Kearney says, even if anything she did precipitated the attack, it was inevitable from poor papa's condition when he saw him just before. Oh, if we only could let Elliot know this!"

"Certainly, that could be done in some way through the papers. I'll manage that, and write it out so that no one but Elliot would understand," decides Charlotte, hopefully. "That may bring her back soon; I'll manage to get it in a good many papers in the different cities, and repeat it now and then, so that she cannot fail to see it sometime—if she does not come back earlier of her own accord. Have you written to tell Delphine yet?"

"Charlotte! when the poor child begged me so not to!"

Charlotte suppresses the least little shrug of her graceful shoulders.

"Well, perhaps it is best; Mr. Burger would have to know, I suppose, if Delphine did, and it is well to keep all these things in the family proper. I was glad to see, in your letter to me, that little Medlington asserted you had sent Elliot away to keep her out of the distress and excitement of papa's illness. I shall manage, while I am here, to leave them in that impression; and if they could just imagine that she is to remain away (her education being defective, perhaps,) so much the better. Let them have it all their own way, Margaret," she adds, quickly. "Do not you and Kate set yourselves to contradict any rumors of that sort, but remember the less you say of Elliot, the better; the more readily she could come back and fit into her old place without being gossiped over. And you were perfectly right not to make any appeal to Aunt Margaret for advice; if there is anything she hates, it is to be involved in any out-of-the-way proceeding, as this of Elliot's certainly is. I may have to tell her when I go home; that will be bad enough; but as to asking her to interest herself in it!"

"Dear Charlotte," Margaret ventures, timidly, "must you go? for a long time at least? Cannot you stay here where we are all feeling alike? It would be such a comfort!"

But Charlotte puts up her hands in a way that does not hint of her genuine dismay at such an idea.

"Margaret! And Aunt Margaret just starting to the springs, without any one to look after her maid! Seriously, my dear, you can't conceive what an inconvenience she would think it; and I have received too much kindness at Aunt Margaret's hands, to do what she would consider a positive unkindness. No, indeed: she made me promise not to out-stay my week's leave-of-absence, if I really found papa better."

Margaret looks at her sister with tears in her eyes, that transform into fetters the slight gold

bands on the wrists which Charlotte lets fall in her lap after that helpless gesture.

"I don't know how I ever could have stood it, Charlotte, if I had happened to be the eldest of us, instead of you, and Aunt Margaret had chosen me. But there comes May; and Hussy with a tray: I think she must have something for you to eat. And Dr. Kearney is going!"

Charlotte rose, and there was a light clink of her golden fetters, as she took up her hat and filloped off a dead rose-leaf which had fallen on it. Then she glanced after the young doctor's slight figure, as it disappeared through the window open to the floor.

"And who is this Doctor Kearney, who has fallen in love with our Kate?"

"Fallen in love with Kate!" Margaret echoed the words incredulously. "Indeed, you are mistaken. Kate would never look at any one but Ambrose."

"Then you ought to teach her to. As if she could ever marry him! Nonsense. Why, Ambrose?"

"Do you know anything of Ambrose in the city?" Margaret asked, eagerly. "Kate never says a word, but I don't believe she hears at all regularly of late. You know we never did talk of it, because papa always disliked the match so much. And Bessie wrote once that Ambrose was not doing very well. Not that I think Kate would give him up easily: but maybe Bessie, finding Kate will not listen to her, has persuaded Ambrose to make the break. I can't ask Kate; she never mentions Ambrose's name. Is Kate looking quite well to you, Charlotte?" she asked, with an anxious strain in her voice. "I fancy she was a little pale and dispirited, even before—Indeed," she interrupted herself apologetically, "I never did think Ambrose half good enough for our Kate. But she will never care for any one else. And as for Doctor Kearney!"

"For goodness' sake, don't tell her I made such a silly speech," interrupted Charlotte, quickly. "No, Ambrose hardly ever comes to see me: we never were very good friends, you know," she said, charitably refraining from all mention of his greater friendship with Bessie. "Here comes Kate. Aunt Hussy, I am very glad to see you looking so well," she said, putting out her hand to the old servant, as she came up the steps.

* * * * *

Doctor Kearney stopped at the post-office for his morning's mail as he went up-street from the Burnley house; but it was not until late in the day that he found time for more than a mere glance at his paper. He was reading it leisurely through, as he sauntered along by the court-house, under the lindens that roof that part of the street, standing in a line down the middle of the broad pavement. They flung their shade across the

court-house terrace above, too, where half a dozen hard-worked lawyers and clerks had drawn their arm-chairs to the railing, and set to discuss the news of the day, or even to play a quiet game of backgammon apart. "Kearney's going to lose that case down at the mill," said some one among them, looking after the young doctor as he passed. "He's as black as a thunder-cloud."

Just then, Doctor Kearney had lifted his eyes from his paper, and was staring in a strange sort of way at the corner house in front of him, as he crossed from the court-house square. It was an inoffensive house enough, for all the black look he gave it: standing back with closed shutters, in the midst of its grass plats where the wild violets were opening their blue eyes at the blue-birds singing in the trees. It was the doctor's own fault that it stood there with that desolate aspect, for was it not he who had sent away Miss Alethea's neighbor?

Miss Alethea! He turns suddenly, and as he catches sight of her at her parlor window, he is coming in without the ceremony of ringing. The little lady lays down her book on the window-sill, and looks up at him with a smile, but with no surprise.

"Ah, good morning, doctor. An old-fashioned May day, isn't it? The fair weather has really set in at last? I see Trotting Billy is in town this morning; and we all know his instinct is never at fault, and he never leaves his winter quarters in the almshouse if there is to be any cold weather."

But the doctor has no answering smile.

"Have you seen that?" he asks, abruptly, laying a paper in her lap.

"The *Gazette*?" Miss Alethea glanced at the name. "Yes, occasionally; I used to take it."

"Not the paper. That." He stoops, and points out a paragraph, which Miss Alethea reads slowly aloud:

"On the eighth instant, at Saint Paul's church, by the Rev. ——" (she slurs the name in her haste now) "Ambrose Archer to Miss Elizabeth Morris."

In the pause, the paper slides down rustling to the floor. The slight sound rouses Miss Alethea, with a violent start. She lifts her frightened eyes to Doctor Kearney.

"Ambrose married? What will Kate say?"

He says nothing to that. If he compresses his lips more firmly, under the blonde mustache, Miss Alethea does not see.

"And who on earth is this Elizabeth Morris?" she asks, in a bewildered way.

"Miss Bessie," the doctor answered, with a grim smile at her stupidity.

"How should I guess? I never heard her called Elizabeth in my life. And Morris isn't such an uncommon name."

"Then you had no hint of this?" he interrupts.

"I? Hint of this? Not I, indeed," she says, angrily. "Of course I had not. I thought Bessie

might marry; but, to tell the truth —" She stops there in confusion.

"Pray go on."

"Kate and I always thought you and Bessie might marry."

"I can't see what ground you and Miss Kate had for such a supposition," he says, stiffly. He has taken the chair opposite hers, and picks up the paper from the floor, intent on smoothing it out upon the window-seat with rather a heavy hand.

"It was pretty and romantic, I suppose. I am sure I beg your pardon with all my heart. Such a—Our Bessie!" she breaks in, with passion, "our saint in her niche above us all, how could we ever dream she would turn out such a mere earthy vessel! If you had only let Bessie be, Doctor Kearney! If you had not been so anxious to cure her, all this trouble would have been spared."

He does not wince, though he is paler at her words. "I would do the same again," he says, quietly. "We doctors must never look to the consequences of our cures, or we would be tempted to let the children and innocent die. The future belongs to themselves and to God. The physician is only for the emergency."

"That may rid you of all responsibility about Bessie; but what of—"

There is a warning look in the doctor's face, which is turned to the door, while Miss Alethea's back is towards it, and in an instant she feels Kate's arm round her, and hears her ask the doctor defiantly, "What is the matter?" Dear child, she thinks his visit a professional one, and that he has just pronounced Miss Alethea's condition critical. Miss Alethea understands her, and draws the girl's hand down over her shoulder, keeping it fast in her two soft old ones, while she looks across at the doctor who has risen to his feet. Why will he not speak? He is accustomed to break more startling news than this to many a sufferer. Is it easier to say time has ended, and eternity must begin, than to tell a girl the everyday tale that a heart is faithless? But the doctor stands looking at Miss Alethea with beseeching eyes as if it were easier for her to speak than for him.

"What is it, Miss Alethea? Something dreadful, I can see in your faces. Please tell me; I never could bear suspense."

"After awhile," says Miss Alethea, and glances up at the doctor. If he will not speak, why does he not go? But he stands there as if rooted to the spot, and watches Kate as if he thought such a case as hers within his pharmacopœia.

Kate's glance falls on the paper on the window-seat. Perhaps she would not have observed it but that Doctor Kearney makes a hurried movement to withdraw it, then desists. Newspapers have always deaths and marriages in them, and Kate—

An ashen pallor comes over her face; a stronger fear into her eyes. She never thinks of anything but death. "He is not dead!" she gasps. "Not dead! anything but that!"

"He is not dead," says Miss Alethea, bitterly.

Kate has caught up the paper, and is reading it. She is twice as quick as Miss Alethea in comprehending it. And, thank heaven, the color is coming into her face. Is life so much better than truth and honor?

She has folded the paper and laid it back in its place, and stands with hands clasped on the back of Miss Alethea's chair. There has been but one hard gasping breath like a choked sob; and then she stands among them, a desperately wounded, trapped creature at bay. Ambrose—Bessie—Doctor Kearney—Miss Alethea—she braves them all in her bewilderment of pain, as if they all were her enemies.

"He has a right to marry," she says, with that defiant flash in her gray dilated eyes. "There is nothing between us. He has a right to marry."

No one answers her.

And then—is it that she sees the slow tears trickling down unheeded from Miss Alethea's eyes; or the dark flush of pain in Doctor Kearney's face?—the defiance fades out of hers, and she says, low and slowly:

"I did not think it would be Bessie. Bessie, who besought me not to marry Ambrose."

"I don't think any of us looked for the news," Miss Alethea answers, bitterly.

"Ah well, I ought not to be the one to blame her for loving him."

"Blame her!" exclaims Miss Alethea. "Heaven help her—I wouldn't put out my finger to."

"Dear Miss Alethea. I know you love me. But you do not want me now. I think I shall go home."

She stoops and kisses her dear old friend as she speaks; and Miss Alethea sees she does not want words of hers for comfort, nor for blame of Ambrose. Miss Alethea can only kiss her in her turn, and let her go. Perhaps if the doctor were not here, she would say something.

But Miss Alethea is glad that he walks home with Kate. It is not far; but the child is frightfully pale, and he will see that no one stops her. Miss Alethea thinks Kate is grateful to him for his thought of her. Dear Kate! Miss Alethea is thankful she can feel anything but wrath and malice and all uncharitableness, for every son of man.

Kate will never mention Ambrose's name again, her old friend is very sure. She is far too much hurt to uncover her wound, even to those who feel for her. Miss Alethea must ask the doctor to watch her, so that her health does not fail under the blow.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

[Written expressly for Godey's Lady's Book.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ.

Authors of "Ingrémisco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

"His face bright, not like a window ruddy with a fire within; rather like a wintry pane tinged by the setting sun."

"Too warm for exercise—too warm for the breeze under the elm—" said Geoffrey, sardonically, stringing together Gertrude's repeated excuses for remaining within doors that summer afternoon. He had been watching her, cool and white in her window, leisurely laying down her embroidery now and then, to take up the fan on the work-table before her, or, oftener, to glance over at her uncle, who sat drowsy in his arm chair rather withdrawn into the shadow. She was not really anxious about Mr. Oliver, but an undefined feeling of disquietude kept her close to his side during much of this oppressive summer, which had certainly told upon his strength. How much, Gertrude did not see. It was too warm for any unnecessary exertion, so why should she be uneasy because he seldom cared to leave his chair?

Geoffrey, however, perceived quite plainly the change in Mr. Oliver, and was very sure that day by day the silver cord was loosening. He had therefore urged, as delicately as possible, the expediency of a speedy marriage, as best for Gertrude. To his surprise, Mr. Oliver opposed it.

"Wait until I am gone," he had said. "I cannot outlast the summer, and I would fain have Gertrude to myself until the end."

This afternoon, Geoffrey had been trying all manner of devices to get her to himself, and had failed in every one of them. He had something

to say to her, but nothing short of telling her so outright would have induced her to follow him out into the porch, and he did not care to make his communication too formally. So at last, in his impatience, he pushed back his chair and declared he must be off. Mr. Oliver pressed him to stay to tea, and Gertrude looked up at him over the cool waving of her fan, and advised his waiting until after dark, when it would be cooler.

But Geoffrey would listen to neither, evidently preferring a solitary evening at home, and a warm ride in the sun.

"I have something to show you, before I go," he said, coming over to the window. "It is only a note from Charlotte Burnley. It has a bit of news in it, however—news to you, perhaps, for I confess it is scarcely such to me."

"Is it so very important?" asks Gertrude, indifferently.

"That is as you may think. I will leave the note with you—if I can find it," continued Geoffrey, searching for it in his pockets. "I certainly thought I brought it with me," still searching.

"No matter," said Gertrude. "You can tell me just as well."

"No, I should rather you should read it. You will see if I am not a true prophet—that is, if I can find the thing. Ah, here it is."

And the dainty envelope, with its colored monogram and faint perfume, was cast into Gertrude's lap. She did not take it up, nor ask what was in it, and he was secretly pleased, fancying that she did not quite like him to receive it.

"Read it at your leisure, and tell me what you think of it," he said, carelessly, as he turned to say good-bye to Mr. Oliver.

Gertrude did not seem at all anxious as to the contents of Charlotte's note; for when Geoffrey went away, she put it unopened into her pocket.

It remained there—its light weight a heavy burden to her—until at sunset, Mr. Oliver insisted on her going out of doors awhile. He feared her

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evening would be a long one, since Geoffrey had taken his departure so much earlier than usual.

"Betty will look out for me, and no doubt I shall sleep all the time you are gone," he said, by way of proof that she was not especially needed.

She strolled across the lawn and struck into the road, hardly heeding where she was going, until with a slight start, she found herself emerging from the woodland fringe upon the field of broom where she had stood and told Cyril of her engagement to her cousin. The whole scene came before her very vividly then: Cyril's face was there, as she had seen it in the moonlight, and it needed no mental effort to recall most of the words he had spoken.

She sat down on the parched grass of the hill-slope, under the clump of broom where she had stood that night, and took out Charlotte's letter; perhaps she intended to use it as an exorcism, to lay the ghost of Cyril Elliot, standing there before her.

It was a small square of tinted paper, well covered over with a bold, free handwriting, which Gertrude drew from the envelope. Charlotte's evident excuse for writing was to thank Geoffrey for some music he had sent; thanks so profuse, that Gertrude turned over the page impatiently, wondering if Geoffrey had only given her the note to let her know that he had sent the music. If so, he might have saved himself the trouble, for she cared nothing at all about it.

But it was the third page, that contained the gist of the note, the bit of news foreseen by Geoffrey; the third page, which Gertrude read slowly and attentively.

"You are not wrong in your surmises," so Charlotte wrote. "If you are really anxious to hear the songs, you must manage to let me sing them to you this summer, for my singing days are almost over—unless Cyril will not object to my amusing an *old friend*. If Aunt Margaret gains her heart's desire this winter, I ought to be glad, for she has been very good to me. Could one only choose one's own fate—but that seldom happens, with women at least. I trust you with this secret, partly because you have already guessed it; so keep it until I give you leave to speak. C. B."

Gertrude read over more than once these two last pages, which were crossed; she seemed to be trying to master their meaning. Why should Cyril care, if Charlotte sang to Geoffrey? She had done a good deal of caroling to him, and Cyril had not interfered. As for Mrs. Elliot's wish, that Gertrude very well knew, without any explanation from Charlotte. But that Charlotte should object, and should choose to write to Geoffrey about it—

A moment's thought assured Gertrude that something her cousin had written, no doubt banteringly, had called out this confidence; and now

that he had the proof of that which he had long believed, he could not resist showing it to Gertrude. Well, she could not refuse to believe, now that she had read it, Geoffrey might have thought. And indeed, how could she?

And it was not yet three months, since Cyril had stood just there—Gertrude could have touched the spot—and said he did not care to love any other woman, as he must not love her.

Three months! Is not that long enough for any change? Gertrude, looking blankly round her now, sees nothing the same as it was on that night. The golden bloom is gone from the broom, the hard stems stand up stiff and black amidst their scant harsh leafage and dark pods; the hill-side is parched and brown with sedge-grass under the August sun; the clear waters of the branch, that somewhere gurgled out of sight in yonder thicket, are dried up with summer heats. The gay moonlit parterre has vanished; Cyril's face and voice have faded away with it. And the gray dusk has blotted out the sunset glow; the whip-poor-will's sharp lashing note whistles shrill and fast through the still air.

If only it were any one but Charlotte Burnley! Not care to love any other woman? Gertrude is telling herself that of course she had scarcely believed him, and that she would have been glad to find him so light of love, if it had been any other than Charlotte, of whom she had heard him say that she was insincere and wily. Are these the traits a man seeks in his wife? What chance for happiness—

Her indignation began to die out then. Surely Cyril was unworthy of a better fate. Of course he would be fooled and tampered with by Charlotte; there was no help for him. Gertrude was sorry, very sorry for her friend.

After all, was not she in a measure to blame for Cyril's down-fall? For that it was a down-fall, she did not deny. If she had been quite frank about her engagement, Cyril would have had no disappointment to make him reckless of his future. Gertrude was more inclined to bring the burden of this mistake of Cyril's on her own shoulders, than to think him so fickle that he could swear one thing by moonlight, and something quite different under the gas.

"Don't sin against your heart, and vow an untruth in seeming kindness to Geoffrey Forbes." She remembered his words, and how he looked as he stood just there, and spoke them. Could she not retort them now?

The thought startled her. There could be nothing similar in their positions, that they should need the same advice. She had been engaged to her cousin for two years now, and she had never really swerved, save once when Geoffrey had been unkind and unjust to her. Cyril would never have that complaint to make, for Charlotte would be good-tempered and not exacting. And

yet, and yet—Had she never before now questioned the strength of her love for Geoffrey Forbes?

Gertrude rose to her feet with a start. How long she had been sitting there, she could not conjecture; some time, however, judging from the gathering twilight. Her uncle might need her.

Charlotte's note had slid from her lap when she rose so hastily, and lay on the ground before her. Her impulse was to set her foot on it, and trample it in the dust. Yet she had to stoop and pick up the bit of tinted paper and restore it to the envelope, and then put it in her pocket. Geoffrey might ask her for it.

Gertrude walked home quickly. She was flushed and heated by her haste, yet she did not linger in the night air, but went at once to the study.

The twilight was deeper still within there; and she thought her uncle sleeping in his chair, as she bent over him, for his eyes were closed, until she heard him saying, in a low, soft voice:

"Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time,
Say not good-night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me good-morning."

"They are old-fashioned lines," he said, opening his eyes and smiling at her. "They are an old woman's apostrophe to life, and in it she speaks the feelings of all old people. The candle, when burned into the socket, gives but a flickering and uncertain light, and one can afford to let it go out suddenly."

"Not if it leaves some one in total darkness," said Gertrude, resting her cheek lightly on the gray head.

"But only for a few short hours, dear. The sunlight is sure to dawn—God's own light, which always brings cheerfulness. Death must come soon to me now; or rather, the good-morning. I strive not to be impatient for the end, though the waiting is wearying, for old age is feeble, and the long years to look back on must sadden one."

"And I am feeble and sad, too—sad at the prospect of a long stretch of years; and too feeble from my inexperience to live them."

There was a sob in Gertrude's voice, such as a tired child might give who would fain keep up bravely, even beyond her strength.

"The years will not weary you as they come, dear. You will scarcely mark them until they have some weight from their accumulation. They are like the waves of the tide, that one by one steal from us something—for there seldom sweeps upon us one vast tidal wave that leaves all wrecked at once. Indeed, there is much we lose that we scarcely stop to count until we come to the chimney-corner and sum up our losses. Some of them we number silently, for they belong to us alone, and no one heeded that we ever valued them."

Gertrude had no words with which to answer. The old man, with all his ties to life severed save this girl clinging to him in silent sorrow—could she ask him to live on for her?—to live on because she feared the loneliness of the way?

He must have partly guessed her thoughts, for he added:

"You must not forget Geoffrey, dear. If it were not for him I would have some fears and misgivings for your future. You will find him kind and tender, I am sure; and I have made it a point of honor with him to look out for your comfort. I only hope your younger and sharper-sighted vision may see no flaws in what I have done. Geoffrey is proud, and most men would rather give than take. It may not be generous, but it is human nature."

Gertrude made no answer; indeed, she hardly understood what her uncle was saying. She was overwhelmed in the certainty of this loss which he would fain break gently to her. She could think of nothing else. Cyril Elliot's engagement, which had pained her but a half-hour ago, was nothing to her now; nor was Geoffrey Forbes's love a comfort or a trial. She had gone too far back in her life for either of them to touch her—to the time when Uncle Oliver was her sole friend and comforter, and life without him an utter blank.

Presently Mr. Oliver roused himself to complain that Geoffrey had gone home so early. Something must have happened, something extraordinary. Gertrude must send a message, that he might be sure to come over in the morning.

Gertrude listened patiently, and at last persuaded her uncle that it was not necessary to send a message for Geoffrey, who might walk in upon them at any moment to-morrow. But as the evening dragged itself on, Mr. Oliver's impatience increased fourfold, and he insisted upon Gertrude's writing to her cousin, asking him to come over early next morning, as Mr. Oliver wished to speak to him on business.

"Tell Betty to send it early to-morrow," said her uncle, when the note was duly written and directed. His voice was eager and tremulous.

"He is not fit for business. I hope Betty, for once in her life, will forget to do Uncle Oliver's bidding," were Gertrude's thoughts as she took the note to Betty; though she delivered the message with it.

"I'll be sure to send it. That is, if I am spared and nothing happens," promised cautious Betty.

"You don't look at death's door, and I can foresee nothing to happen to you; yet, nevertheless, I hope something will keep the note from going."

"Do you guess what is in it?" asked Betty, her curiosity at once aroused.

"I might, as I wrote it. It is only to ask Cousin Geoffrey to come over to-morrow. Betty,

do you see any change in Uncle Oliver?" asked Gertrude, abruptly.

"Change! To be sure I do. When I first came here to live he was a young man, and as straight as a Lombardy poplar. Now he stoops, and his hair is as white as cotton."

"I don't mean to ask whether Uncle Oliver looks older than he did forty years ago, but last year, or last month."

"You might see for yourself, Miss Gertrude, he's not a bit like what he was. He used to ride over the farm, and give an eye to things. He'd not put up with much he'd see now, if he could get about. But what's the use of telling him? He'd be sure to tell Mr. Geoffrey to right it, and we want no such fingers in the pie; for if Mr. Geoffrey is to begin to set things straight, he'd begin to think the property's his. Never give a man an inch, where a woman can be imposed on, or he'll be sure to take an ell, if not the whole measure."

"I don't see what a woman has to do with the place," said Gertrude, impatiently. "What I asked you, was whether you see any difference in Uncle Oliver's strength in the last few weeks."

"He don't move about much, so it isn't easy to say," returned Betty, warily. "I'd send for a doctor, though, if you're a bit anxious. They're apt to do the well folks more good than the sick ones. And I'd say nothing to cross your uncle," added Betty, seeing that Gertrude was moving to the door. "A quiet mind is the best of blessings. And besides, it's the way of old folks to put everything in order before they go, and for a long time afterwards, which means they want to have their way on earth and in heaven at the same time. One need not bide by what they say, after they are gone; but there's small use in saying so."

"No use, Betty? I, for one, should consider myself more bound to carry out Uncle Oliver's wishes after he had left me, than when I had a chance of urging the point with him."

"Then it's to be hoped he'll tell you nothing, neither one way nor the other. It's a bad way to be tying up those who won't use their own sense."

Gertrude went back to the study, feeling that she had gained nothing by questioning Betty. She would speak to Geoffrey next morning, and find out what he thought. But there are some questions we have no need to ask, Time himself giving us such speedy answers.

That night, Gertrude was awakened out of her sound, young sleep, by a voice calling her name. She was not sure she was not dreaming, until she opened her eyes and saw Betty standing by her, a light in her hand.

"What is the matter, Betty?" she asked, dreamingly.

"Your uncle wants you. He's not well, and is asking for you."

In a moment Gertrude was on her feet, sick and dizzy with the shock.

"You can take time to dress yourself; he's not so badly off as that. I'll light your candle, and go back to him."

Gertrude dressed as quickly as her trembling fingers would permit. It seemed a long time to her, before she stood at her uncle's door, though actually it was but a few minutes.

"Is he asleep?" she whispered to Betty, who motioned to her to come forward to the bedside.

Mr. Oliver heard her voice. "Is it you, Gertrude? It is hard on you to disturb you at such an hour," said the tender, weary voice. "I want to speak to you when Geoffrey comes. Betty will send for him when it is light. It cannot be very long now."

Not very long. Not very long before the breaking of the heavenly day.

He had closed his eyes and seemed to sleep. Gertrude took the chair Betty had placed for her. The hand her uncle had taken was still clasped in his—not tightly, and yet if she had wished to move, she could not have done so without disturbing the slumberer.

Betty whispered softly that she had sent for the doctor; and then drew back in the darkness, to wait silently until she should be needed.

The windows were wide open, to let in what little breeze there was, but there was a dead stillness out of doors, as well as in the dimly-lighted chamber—a stillness as of expectancy.

After awhile, there came the sound of wheels in the graveled lane. Mr. Oliver was the first to catch the noise, and opened his eyes. "It is Geoffrey?" he said. "I have been saving my strength to speak to him."

Betty had come to the bedside. She glanced at Gertrude and shook her head. She had not sent for Geoffrey yet. She did not speak, however, but went down stairs to meet the doctor.

"Man goeth to his long home," murmured Mr. Oliver. "Do you remember the rest, Gertrude?"

She conquered with effort the sob in her voice. "Or ever the silver cord be loosened, or the golden bowl broken, or the pitcher broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern."

Though there came no sound, only a slight motion of his lips, she was conscious that her uncle was repeating after her: "Then shall the dust return unto the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto the God who gave it."

Just then, Betty entered with the doctor, and Mr. Oliver again opened his eyes. He seemed very sensitive to all sounds.

"Is it you, Geoffrey? I have given you an early start. But death will wait no man's convenience."

"It is not Mr. Forbes," the doctor said, coming forward, and taking in his the hand that lay

the outside of the covering, gliding his fingers to the wrist to find the feebly-beating pulse. "I am sorry to find you ill."

"Ah, it is you, doctor. You cannot mend the broken pitcher; that is past man's skill. Geoffrey Forbes is all I want just now. I have a last word for him."

No one answered him. Only the breeze which began to murmur among the leaves of the trees, was heard; and the tick of the doctor's watch, which he held in his hand as he counted the thin, weak beats of the fast-failing pulse.

"Are you sure you sent for Geoffrey, Betty?" asked Mr. Oliver, after a few minutes' silence.

"Not yet, sir. You said not till daylight. It's dark as yet."

"Then it will be too late," he answered, with a sigh. "Sit down, doctor, you must be weary, standing so long. It is hard on you to have brought you out in the night, for no purpose but to see me go. It is a tiresome life you lead, at the beck and call of every one. It should keep you a good man, you hear death's messages so often. Betty must get you a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. It is a long drive you have had."

He spoke slowly, as if the difficulty was the keeping of his mind upon what he wished to say, rather than the inability to express it.

"There is time enough to think of my comfort," the doctor said. "You are not suffering?"

"No not suffering, not even uncomfortable," he added, looking at Gertrude with a smile, as if to reassure her. "Only I wished so very much to see Geoffrey. Gertrude, put your ear close to my lips; I have a secret for you."

She leaned down her head, almost touching his face. It was an old way of her uncle's, to whisper a pleasant surprise to her. What was this last message to be? For herself, or for another? The dear lips moved rapidly, but she could only catch the words "Tell Geoffrey—" the rest was too low for her to hear, if indeed there was anything more.

The doctor gently dropped the hand he held, and placed his own on the old man's heart. Then he walked away, and stood looking out of the window. "It is half-past four," he said, as if referring to his watch. "The day has just begun to dawn—an eternal day to the good old gentleman."

He was speaking to Betty, who had gone to him to hear his opinion. Gertrude also heard him, though she never moved, but kept her ear close to the breathless lips. There were no more words for her.

Presently Betty came to her, and touched her gently. "It is our loss, but his gain; you should think of that, dearie," she said, with a sob.

Gertrude raised her head at the sound of Betty's familiar voice. The day-dawn was creeping very slowly up the east; the birds were beginning a

faint twittering in the trees; the new day had broken, unlike any other Gertrude had yet known.

"You had better send at once for Mr. Forbes, and get Miss Oliver out of the room. If you could persuade her to lie down it would be well," said the doctor, beckoning Betty towards him.

"Yes, I heard," Gertrude returned, when Betty came to her to repeat this advice. "Send for Cousin Geoffrey, if you please; but let me stay here until he comes." And then she laid her head down wearily on the pillow beside her dead, and sought to shut out all thought of her personal loss in picturing the bright, perfect day he was, she knew, entering upon.

Geoffrey came as quickly as he could get over the three miles of ground in a fast gallop. Gertrude heard his horse's hoofs on the gravel. She shuddered slightly as if the sound startled her back to her loss, and she lifted her head. The sun was sending a stream of bright light into the room, for Betty had not closed the shutters. She drew them in, as she told Gertrude that her cousin was downstairs.

"Tell him I have gone to lie down," she said, rising reluctantly; "that the doctor wished me to."

CHAPTER XV.

"Some lives are like sonatas; the saddest
Slowest part is in the middle."

It was the day after the funeral, when Betty came to Gertrude with a request from Mr. Lloyd, her uncle's lawyer, that she would go downstairs to see him. "I might as well tell you what he wants," added Betty. "It's your uncle's will he's waiting to read; and Mr. Geoffrey's here ready to listen to him."

"I don't wish to hear Mr. Lloyd read Uncle Oliver's will, Betty. Ask him to read it to Cousin Geoffrey, and he can tell me what is in it some time or other."

"But it's you that ought to hear, and it's the law, no doubt, makes Mr. Lloyd want to read it to you. There is a deal of form and nonsense about law. You may depend upon it, Mr. Lloyd wouldn't have driven over here and brought Mr. Geoffrey with him for no purpose. I'll get you a fresh handkerchief, and then I'll try and go down with you," continued Betty, supposing there must necessarily be a fresh outburst of grief, when both she and the handkerchief would be useful.

"They're in the study, dear," she said, coming downstairs close behind Gertrude, and seeing she was turning towards the parlor.

"I can't go there," exclaimed Gertrude, shivering at the thought of meeting a stranger in that familiar room.

"I'm sure it's the best place to hear his last words in," urged Betty. "It's the last bidding

you'll ever get from him, and it will sound the more solemn coming to you in the study, where he always stayed."

"You are right, Betty. If Uncle Oliver tells me to do anything, I will not hesitate to do it." And, though her lips quivered painfully, Gertrude walked with a firm step to the study.

Geoffrey rose and placed a chair for her when she entered. Mr. Lloyd did not see the act, as he came forward to shake hands with her; and he pushed towards her the great arm-chair which had always been her uncle's peculiar property.

"Sit down, Miss Oliver," he said, blandly. "I am sorry to have had to disturb you. I can only promise not to keep you long. This reading of wills is a painful duty; I've had a good deal of it to do in my day, and I can scarcely remember one which gave universal satisfaction. There is always one left out in the cold, or another made too comfortable. The law makes the best will, to my thinking: every one gets a scrap, so cannot grumble."

Gertrude found nothing to answer in this preface. She gently declined the chair Mr. Lloyd offered, and went over where Geoffrey was still standing, and held out her hand in salutation, a faint smile quivering on her lips.

An indefinite dread smote Geoffrey. Gertrude was about to be made independent, in this world's parlance; would her new position incline her to take a new view of life? Already he had a sense of something unfamiliar in the girl. Was it only her black dress and her white face? of neither of which had he had a glimpse, until yesterday at the funeral, and then, though her hand had rested on his arm as they stood together at the open grave, her heavy veil had almost blotted her face out from him. And now "the grave and gate of death" had shut down on all that past of hers, and she must look up and face life again.

Mr. Lloyd, not understanding why Gertrude declined the chair he offered her, and thinking it a pity that the most comfortable seat in the room should be unoccupied, drew the cumbrous article to the table, and spreading the will before him, nodded to Betty as he did so. "Please take a seat: you are one of the parties interested."

"I'll have no seat," replied Betty, stoutly. "I've always stood to take Mr. Oliver's orders, and I'll do so to the end."

Betty crossed the room and took her stand behind Gertrude's chair as she spoke, plainly implying by the action that she intended to see her young mistress properly protected, in spite of the attorney.

Mr. Oliver's will was brief. First, there was a statement of a small sum of money left to him in trust for his beloved niece, Gertrude Oliver, with the interest accruing, both of which moneys he desired his executor to pay as promptly as possible. There was also an annuity of three hundred

dollars to his faithful servant and friend, Betty Brown. Then followed a few details as to the payment of any just debts which might be owing at his death. His land, house, furniture, plate, farm stock, bank stock, bonds, moneys, and chattels, without restriction, were willed and bequeathed to his cousin, Geoffrey Forbes, and to his heirs forever.

There was a silence when Mr. Lloyd finished the reading—a silence which he himself broke by remarking that this was not Mr. Oliver's original will, but one which he had requested him to draw about a year ago. Mr. Oliver had then burned his former will, and had given this into his, Mr. Lloyd's, keeping. He knew of no other, and though he had looked carefully through Mr. Oliver's papers, he had not succeeded in finding one.

"He was daft, when he made that one," said Betty, under her breath. "Not of sound mind, I take it."

"I beg your pardon; I never knew Mr. Oliver's mind clearer or more collected than when he dictated this will," replied Mr. Lloyd, his quick ear having caught Betty's remark. "He had some odd notions, some very odd notions, about property," he continued, turning to Geoffrey. "Old-fashioned, certainly; scarcely belonging to these times or this country; and he was tenacious of them."

"Of course Uncle Oliver's mind was clear," said Gertrude, glancing indignantly at Betty. "No one can have the slightest doubt of it; and he has done perfectly right in leaving his property as he has."

Gertrude rose as she spoke, and moved to the door. Both the men rose and bowed silently as she left the room. They could not detain her, as Mr. Lloyd had nothing further to say, and Geoffrey did not care to speak until he should be alone with her.

"It is confoundedly hard on her," muttered the lawyer, forgetting, or perhaps not caring that the heir was near enough to overhear.

Geoffrey smiled slightly, but did not explain that Mr. Oliver was not at all hard on Gertrude in leaving her nothing. He had only bound Geoffrey the more strongly to fulfil his promise to marry her. He wondered, however, that no hint of this singular will had been given him. Of course, he understood that his cousin Oliver only intended him to hold the property for Gertrude's use until after their marriage, which must be very soon now. Their engagement never having been announced, it was not to be expected that Geoffrey would enter into any explanation with Mr. Lloyd just then, especially as Mr. Oliver had not seen fit to do so when he dictated the will. Besides, Mr. Lloyd's last remark did not incline Geoffrey to make confidences.

"It's a shame!" exclaimed Betty, as soon as

she was safe in Gertrude's room, away from all risk of being overheard criticising an act of her dead master. "I thought if there was one wise man in the world, it was Mr. Oliver; and just to think of his turning fool like the rest of them, and that, too, when there is no chance in this world of telling him a bit of your mind."

"For shame, Betty! You shall not speak so," said Gertrude, authoritatively.

"It's none the less true, Miss Gertrude, if you are angry at my saying it. You've heard it with your own ears, so you can't well contradict me. To leave you nothing, only the little your own father did, and he was never a lucky hand with money. Maybe, as the interest's been accumulating all those years, it's more worth having. And what was Mr. Geoffrey to him, in comparison with you? It may have been, though, he wanted to keep him fair and square, and thought if he had everything in his own right, he'd be ashamed to break with you."

"Betty," said Gertrude, turning round on her suddenly, but with no wrath in her face; "I can't tell you how glad I am that Cousin Geoffrey has everything."

"Yes, I know; there's not many of us wise enough to wish for the best. For my own part, I'd rather have the purse-strings in my own hands, than be a queen. One is real power, and the other's just an empty name. You think little enough of the dollars, but I can tell you there's much comfort in them."

"That is just what I hope," returned Gertrude, laconically.

"And the house, and the place which you've been used to ever since you can remember anything; I suppose you're indifferent about them too."

A quick change came over Gertrude's face, but she was not going to yield to it.

"Not indifferent," she said, gently; "but Uncle Oliver had a right to do with them as he pleased."

"That's just what I deny; but there's small use in talking. You're not going to dispute the will."

"Certainly I am not."

"I didn't think you would, though from Mr. Lloyd's looks I fancy he'd do his best to help you."

"Mr. Lloyd! Why, he said plainly that he never saw Uncle Oliver more clear and decided than when he made that will."

"Then the more credit to him if he got it set aside. Besides, didn't he draw up the will, and the one that knits the stocking finds it easy to ravel it."

"We will have no raveling," Gertrude said curtly.

"I thought as much. I'll go downstairs and see if Mr. Lloyd's going to stay to dinner. He'll not care to see you, though, I'm thinking."

Gertrude said nothing to detain Betty, but

began walking slowly up and down her room, lost in thought. Presently she stopped at the window.

Though the burning August sun was still high overhead, the great oaks kept all green and cool upon the lawn, letting only a stray sunbeam now and then straggle through, flitting over the short turf. The garden showed the summer heats in its few overblown pale roses; and the circling sweep of wood beyond looked faded and dusty, save for an occasional dark patch of pines, or a cloud veering over. There was a sultry shimmer on the shorn wheat-fields, and a parched, worn aspect about everything, which would begin to glow and brighten again when the autumn days set in. But, bright or faded, every light and shadow, every tree and shrub, was as a familiar face to Gertrude. Far away in the distance, amidst the grove surrounding them, she could see the tall red chimneys of Geoffrey Forbes's house. There need be no flitting for her over there now—or a more distant flitting—

"One must make some sacrifice," she said, aloud. "Even now nothing looks the same to me as it looked a month ago. I should feel a stranger in my old home. Better be brave and tell the truth, than live a falsehood which after awhile I dare never confess."

She turned away from the window and began again her slow walk up and down the room. She was too engrossed with her thoughts to remember the men downstairs; indeed, it was not until Betty came into the room some time afterwards, and announced that both Mr. Lloyd and Geoffrey Forbes were gone, that she recollected them. Betty was somewhat mollified by the fact that Geoffrey had not taken immediate possession, and demanded her keys.

Late in the day Geoffrey rode over again to inquire for Gertrude.

"Miss Gertrude is taking her trouble as the young mostly do. They think because one thing is gone from them they've nothing left. Not that the child has much to boast of, since Mr. Lloyd says she's not much better off than a beggar. I've got her to walk out to-day; the first time she's set her foot out of doors, except to the funeral, and that didn't cheer her much."

This was Betty's answer to Geoffrey's query. He scarcely waited to hear the end of it, so eager was he to start off in quest of Gertrude. He was sure she had avoided the road, and that he must search for her somewhere on the place.

He had not gone far from the house before he saw her crossing a field by a narrow foot-path. There were two men jogging along in a wagon in the road just beyond; and after Gertrude had passed they looked back, watching her as she walked slowly on. This annoyed Geoffrey; not so much because he thought he knew that the men were gossiping about Mr. Oliver's will, as that his meeting with Gertrude should have witnesses.

Gertrude was close to Geoffrey before she was conscious of his approach; near enough for him to see that she was very pale, with a whiteness which the sombre hue of her dress no doubt heightened. There were dark rings under her eyes, and a far-away look in them, as if nothing within their ken was worth seeing. She started slightly, when she first caught sight of Geoffrey coming towards her, but showed no sign of agitation, as he partly feared she would.

"Betty told me I would find you somewhere on the place. You look tired, Gertrude; had not you better take my arm?"

She refused gently, and walked on slowly towards the house.

"Gertrude," said Geoffrey, abruptly. "You have been very selfish in your grief. You might have turned to me for comfort; but instead you have turned from me."

"I was better alone," she answered, quickly. "No one could comfort me."

"No one? If you had lost me, you could not have said more," Geoffrey returned, reproachfully.

She gave him a quick, surprised glance. Did Geoffrey dream she loved him better than Uncle Oliver, who had been everything to her since her babyhood? Cousin Geoffrey! Why, she could have lost him twice over, to have kept her uncle, she said to herself, bitterly.

But she prudently remained silent, and Geoffrey supposed she did not care to contemplate the far greater woe that could have befallen her. The thought softened him, and he said, much more gently:

"I have been thinking of your future, my poor darling, whilst you have shut me out of your present. You have me to turn to, now that by Cousin Oliver's death there is nothing to come between us."

"Under any other circumstances," he went on to say, finding Gertrude not inclined to speak. "I would hesitate to urge our marriage. I know it will be a trial to you to think of it in the midst of your grief—"

"So much of a trial, that I could not give it a thought."

"But you will be reasonable, Gertrude. You can manage as quietly as you please. You need not leave home, if you prefer not. All I desire is the right to protect you, and to have in my power the carrying out of the intention of your Uncle's will."

"There was no mention of our marriage in it," Gertrude asserted, uneasily. "I intend the will shall be carried out, as far as I am concerned, to the very letter. But that has nothing to do with our marriage."

"Of course, there was no mention made of it in the will, which was written fully a year ago. No doubt Cousin Oliver, when he dictated it, ex-

pected to be at our wedding. Certainly you must see that he expected you to be my wife, or he would never have left the property as he did."

Gertrude made no answer.

"And you must also see that is best for us not to put off our marriage," added Geoffrey, falling into the common fallacy that silence means consent. "You can scarcely stay here long alone with Betty; and it will be impossible for me to come backwards and forwards as I have been in the habit of doing. In short, Gertrude, dear, you must listen to reason, and not allow your grief to influence your decision."

She turned to him softly.

"Reasoning about our position seems so cold, and harsh, and I would much rather deal gently."

Geoffrey did not understand the drift of her words, so he ignored them. "You must see the peculiarity of our situation, and a little thought would show you the necessity of putting an end to it. I am not altogether selfish in thus urging you to be my wife as soon as possible."

"Cousin Geoffrey—there is something I must tell you—"

"Surely you do not shrink from telling me anything, Gertrude? There should be perfect confidence between us, as well as perfect sympathy. Whatever interests you, must be worth my listening to."

He spoke reassuringly, ascribing her hesitation to timidity. But a sudden movement of Gertrude's startled him. She had flung out of her hand the honeysuckle branch, plucked from the thicket as she passed, and which she had been nervously twisting together, her head bent over. Now she stood still, and fronted him steadily.

What was it in her face, that made his heart beat so? Had Cyril Elliot anything to do with that which she must say to him? At the thought the angry blood mounted to Geoffrey's brow.

"Take care, Gertrude," he cried, warningly. "You are compromising yourself, perhaps unnecessarily. There are some confessions it is not over-wise to make."

"Not for me," she said, lifting her earnest eyes to his. "To be frank is my only safeguard against doing you a great wrong."

"How could you possibly wrong me, Gertrude?" asked Geoffrey, with an effort to speak calmly.

"By marrying you, if I do not care enough for you."

"And perhaps care for some one else."

But Geoffrey does not speak those words, though they are on his lips. A man is not always brave enough to face the worst at once.

There was a moment's silence. It was very long to Gertrude. She had turned her eyes from Geoffrey, when she had made her confession, and they wandered blankly over the brow of the hill, over the terraced-like sweep of the slope beyond,

blemless and withered, a stretch of parched sedge-grass and dark, stiff, flowerless broom.

With a start she turned back, looking up into Geoffrey's face, from Cyril's, there among the broom. What was there in the two alike—the one in the pale moonlight, the other in the sunset flush? Gertrude said brokenly:

"I was so young, so inexperienced; will not that plead with you to forgive me? I confess I scarcely understood what I was doing."

Her voice broke the spell which had been holding Geoffrey looking at her.

"And what has enlarged your understanding?" he asked, quickly.

"Grief and self-communion. I have had a great deal of time to think, lately."

"There has been something more than grief and self-communing to make you speak," said Geoffrey suspiciously.

"Yes, for to be perfectly candid, the thought of our marriage has had much to do with it. I shrunk away too obviously not to know the truth."

"That is not at all unnatural, Gertrude," he said, with evident relief at her confession. "A girl may very well shrink from her marriage, yet be true to her lover. She must shrink from the change in her life. Besides, your nerves are overstrained by the scenes you have passed through, and so the future seems unreal and painful. I was wrong to leave you so much to yourself. Believe me, I meant to be kind."

"Be kinder still, and leave me altogether to myself. It will be better for us both," she told him gently.

"I can't think so, Gertrude. I am speaking much more for you just now than for myself. I see very well how it is with you. You have been torturing yourself, because you find you are incapable of an overwhelming feeling for me; a love which could do and dare anything, everything for its beloved. That is a very unnecessary phase of the passion; for there is not much to do, and still less to dare. Real life you will find very prosaic."

"So prosaic, that it is scarcely worth while for us to touch upon feelings, when we have facts to guide us," she answered, bitterly.

"It is you who have touched upon them, not I. You need have no fears for your future, Gertrude. I am pledged to make you happy, and it will be the study, as well as the pleasure of my life to do so. You have seen the worst side of my temper in the last six months; I acknowledge I have been unreasonably irritable and jealous. My excuse is my love for you. We are not cross and suspicious where we are indifferent. There—I have made as full a confession as you, so let us consider ourselves comfortably at quits. If I ever cast up to you your avowal of not loving me enough, you can retaliate by reminding me of my foolish jealousy."

"Would it not be wiser for us not to place ourselves in a position where we would be tempted to make such recriminations?"

"Oh, married people ought to have grounds for an occasional quarrel, as well as lovers, or they would not enjoy the luxury of a reconciliation."

Gertrude turned away from Geoffrey's smiling glance. She was in earnest, and he was putting aside as totally unimportant a confession which cost her a great effort to make; bantering her, as he might Charlotte. She had intended to speak gently, and try to do away as much as possible with the sting of her words; but the tone Geoffrey chose to take irritated her.

"It is an unhappy fact, which I have no right to conceal from you, that my engagement is a real pain to me."

Her words had the effect of driving the smile from Geoffrey's face and clouding it with a frown instead. He did not speak for a moment; when he did, it was decidedly shortly:

"It is a pity you did not make this discovery some time ago."

"I never really consulted my feelings until this summer. I was very blind, or my unwillingness to speak of our marriage would have shown me the truth."

"You always said it was because of your uncle's need of you, that you would not hear of it, and that seemed to me a sufficiently good reason. But suppose I kept you to the letter of your promise, Gertrude, and—"

"I have kept to the very letter of it," she interrupted. "It was your own compact, that if I told you I did not—"

"Well, go on. Why do you hesitate?"

"If I discovered I did not love you enough when you came to name the marriage-day, I was to say so and go free."

"Then do not let us name it. I am content to wait a while longer. Besides, Gertrude, in all contracts the parties expect the surroundings to be unchanged, else they can justly complain of unfairness. When I made that agreement, I did not expect that we should be separated for nearly a year. I did not contemplate that my wild-flower would be cultivated into an exotic for fools to wonder at."

"It seems to me you were rather anxious for the cultivation, and it was in a measure your own act which sent me away. After all, the change has come," she said, gently. "In common honesty, I must not hold you to your bargain."

So much for so much. In the day when that bargain was made, Geoffrey would have been the last man in the world to rest content with an unequal barter. Now, his starveling love is a miser that would pour out all his hoards at last for just a crust to live upon. But, looking hungrily into Gertrude's quiet, downcast face, he sees that all

his hands cannot buy that. The despair of it turns him bitter.

"Will you be still more honest," he says; "and tell me by whose advice you are acting?"

"Advice? No one has advised me."

"Not Cyril Elliot?"

He had come somewhat nearer to the truth than he really thought, or than Gertrude herself had known, inasmuch as some words dropped by Cyril had done much to open her eyes to the truth. Those words flashed upon her now, and brought a sudden change into her face, which Geoffrey was not slow to mark.

"It is some of his precious work; is it? Well, one can deal much more easily with a man than with a girl. Your marrying Cyril Elliot is not a foregone conclusion because you break with me."

He could not have called her pale then, nor was it a far-away look that she flashed on him.

"If I had jilted you shamefully, and had chosen to marry Cyril, you could not have spoken more bitterly. And you seem to forget you have taken care to let me know of Mr. Elliot's engagement to Charlotte Burnley."

"And I warn you, Miss Charlotte will not let him off as easily as you expect me to do you. A man cannot slip out of an engagement as you women seem to think you have a right to do. As to Elliot—"

"You will please drop Mr. Elliot's name altogether out of this question," said Gertrude, slowly, at white heat. "Any wrong I may unwittingly have done him, he has forgiven; and Charlotte's note to you proves he has forgotten as well. My actions cannot possibly be influenced by Charlotte's fiancé, unless I choose to take a warning from him."

"A warning, Gertrude?"

"Nothing he has said has given it. Only one grows sick at heart over the fickleness and worldliness of people. I wish as devoutly as you that I had never gone into—society, I suppose the proper term is—to learn something of human nature."

Geoffrey glanced into her white, set face, a little bent, as they walked on again mechanically, side by side. His own grew harder and sterner: what is Cyril Elliot's fickleness to her? He said abruptly:

"I would not care how many failures you find in others, if you were unchanged yourself, or if you had given me a hint of your wish to break with me in your uncle's lifetime. But it is scarcely wise in you, now that it is too late."

"Too late! What do you mean?"

"Only that there are so many things to make our engagement binding on us. Neither of us can very well end it, since Cousin Oliver treated our marriage as a certain sequence. Gertrude, do you not see the position you would place me in by breaking with me now? Do you not suppose

that the easy inference would be that I had used our slight tie of blood to gain Cousin Oliver's property? The very visits I paid to you will be so much against me. A weak old man, with a handsome estate touching mine, was worth my attention!"

"Then there is nothing to be done but to tell of our engagement, and of Uncle Oliver's approval of it. It would be just as well, too, to say I broke it after he had gone, and when I understood perfectly the full consequences of my act."

"And you imagine that this bit of truth will be believed?—that people prefer to impute good motives rather than evil ones? Of course it will be said that I threw you over after I had secured the property. You can judge, as well as I, of the effect of having such things believed of one."

"I can't think anything of the kind could be believed of you. I would do anything to prove my recognition of your uprightness, your generosity. Anything, that is, short of—Cousin Geoffrey, you must be convinced that I ought not to be your wife, since it is evident I do not love you enough to make every sacrifice to screen you from unmerited blame."

It was some time before Geoffrey spoke. Gertrude's hard speech barred all attack in the quarter where he had hoped to find her weakest. He had not looked for her to prove so plainly the feebleness of her love for him. For her own part, she could have wept over her words; could have humbly begged his pardon for uttering them, had she not known she would thus only bring him back to the same argument. As it was, he was wise enough to make no allusion to what she had said, but to try another approach.

"Gertrude, you should shield your uncle from all reproach, the more carefully, because you alone can do it."

"Uncle Oliver's name has been above reproach for a whole lifetime; it can stand superior to a week's gossip now."

"I forgot you had grown so worldly wise," said Geoffrey, bitterly. "Indeed, I am constantly forgetting you are not the guileless child who was sent, much against her will, to see the world under Mrs. Elliot's auspices. Oh, Gertrude," he said, with a sudden passionate change of tone, half putting out his hand to her, then letting it fall hopelessly at his side. "Gertrude, if you were more worldly wise; if I thought your poverty would some day drive you to me, I would not regret Cousin Oliver's will."

She looked at him half proudly, half gently.

"If to shield you from an unjust censure, or myself from the pain of wounding you, have not held me back from speaking the truth, believe me, no personal fears for my future—"

"You shall have nothing of that kind to fear," he broke in. "Though Cousin Oliver intended us both to have his property, certainly he never

wished me to enjoy it to the exclusion of all your just rights. I do not consider I have the slightest claim on the estate, now that you have refused me all claim on yourself. Mr. Lloyd can arrange it so that all shall be yours."

"Thank you," said Gertrude, scarcely warming under Geoffrey's generous offer. "That would never make it Uncle Oliver's bequest to me, and I could have received the property only from him. Broomielaw will be far better off in your hands than in mine; it would only be a care and a responsibility to me. Don't take my refusal as ungracious," she added, glancing up to his pale, hurt face. "Ask something else that involves less cost to my peace of mind, and I will promise to grant it."

Geoffrey's eyes had an eager, wistful light in them.

"Will you grant me one thing, and not think hardly of me for asking it?"

"If it is reasonable," she answered, startled by his look.

"It is most reasonable, if you will think a moment of our situation. Remember, Gertrude, how suddenly your decision has come upon me. For months I have been dreaming of my bride; and you have all at once awakened me to the reality that I was blindly dreaming. I am new as yet to my lonely position, complicated as it undoubtedly is by your uncle's unfortunate will. It is not very much to ask you to use your freedom from all control on my part generously."

She was looking at him questioningly, but made no promise.

"I wish to ask you not to be as most girls, ready at once to fall in love with some one else. Let me grow a little used to the knowledge that I am nothing to you, before I find that you are everything to some other man."

"There is but small chance for such a piece of heartlessness," answered Gertrude, coldly.

"Perhaps not. Yet, Gertrude, promise me you will not engage yourself to another until I tell you by word or deed, that I have gotten over the first bitterness of my disappointment."

"I will promise you that, Cousin Geoffrey."

"Will you not swear it?"

"My word is binding. You can trust to my keeping it."

They had reached a small gate which led from the field they had been walking across into the lawn. Gertrude was about putting her hand upon the latch, but Geoffrey opened it himself, letting her pass in first. He knew this interview would be over in a moment or two more, for he had no intention of going into the house, even if Gertrude should ask him, which was decidedly doubtful. He was not so loth to leave her since her promise, for it seemed to give him time to think and act. He had failed to win her as easily as he had thought, and he saw his mistake now. He should

have wooed her, not supposed her won because she was engaged to him. He was willing to try again; and he considered he had very much in his favor: now that Gertrude's promise gave him time, he could make his own opportunities. If Cyril Elliot were not engaged to Charlotte, he might have been less confident; but since he was—

"You will allow me some little right to look after your interests, Gertrude? You do not intend to be altogether independent of my advice, and to treat me as a stranger?" asked Geoffrey, when they stood at the porch-steps.

A warm light came back into the girl's pale face. Was it possible to go back into the olden time, and there find Cousin Geoffrey again?

"I shall always be glad of any advice you will be kind enough to give me," she said, hastily. "I want you to tell me what I had best do. You are not in haste?"

"No; but we will not talk business to-day. I am always ready to be of service to you, however; only let me ask you one question, Gertrude. You are not thinking of going to Mrs. Elliot's?"

"Decidedly not. I would rather go anywhere in the world than there," answered Gertrude, hastily; and, finding Geoffrey had no more questions to ask, she went into the house.

CHAPTER XVI.

"A week ago, only a little week;
It seems so much, much longer, tho' that day
Is every morning still my yesterday."

"Cannot I help you, Gertrude?"

It was Charlotte's voice, a little eager, as she put her head in at the study-door a few days later and found Gertrude seated in the midst of a pile of old papers. The yellow pages seemed to promise some items of interest; and after these two melancholy days which she had passed at Broomielaw, Charlotte was inclined to seize upon even such scraps.

But Gertrude declined; she must go over them alone. She felt that she herself, the last of her name and family, had hardly the right to pry into the secrets of the dead. She did not intend that even Geoffrey should help her.

Thus dismissed, Charlotte was left to her own devices. She found it rather dull: no one to talk to, nothing to do. She might have been at the Springs, dancing, and dressing, and flirting, instead of in the quiet old country house, now, more than ever, sombre and dull in its mourning. There are many sacrifices made in this world, which, unlike the hypocrite's alms-deeds, receive no praise of men; and Charlotte's volunteered visit to the afflicted seems to be one of these.

She was idle and restless this morning. She went into the parlor, dark and dreary in the uncertain light which came through the bowed

shutters. The piano she found locked. She had no idea of opening it; but Betty had not trusted her sense of propriety, and had taken the key away. The birds sang out without compunction, though the master was dead; and Betty did not give Charlotte credit for more sensibility than the sparrows.

There was nothing to be found to beguile the time downstairs, so Charlotte mounted to the story above, looking into the different rooms as if in search of some one. At last she was repaid by a sight of Betty, busily employed in folding Gertrude's colored dresses, and packing them away. It was one of those offices which only a loving hand should do for us—putting out of sight the trappings of ordinary days, before grief came and changed the face of everything.

"Cannot I help you, Betty?" asked Charlotte, for the second time that morning.

"There's nothing to help with, Miss Charlotte. Only a few gowns to fold and lay in the trunk."

"I wonder you put them away. They will all be old-fashioned and useless, when Gertrude takes off her mourning."

"They'll not grow any less old-fashioned hanging up in the wardrobe," returned Betty, tersely.

"Of course not, but you could give them away," suggested Charlotte. "That little Dutch Gwatkin who was over here with berries this morning, would not object to Gertrude's pretty dresses."

"I'll never lend my hand to that foolishness," Betty said, decidedly. "A deal of harm you ladies do with your cast-off finery. It's in your way, and you must get rid of it somehow, and you never think what fools you are making of the poor, in decking them out in it. Gwatkin looks better in her wooden shoes and her short gown, and her queer little cap, than she would if you put her dumpy figure in these flounces, and her round, Dutch face into one of your last year's bonnets. But it'll not be long before she'll be trying them. A body might know the Dutch colony was just new-come, and hadn't learned any better about dress, than about ruling their wives, and curry-combing their cows, and just scratching over their fields, where they set their bits of houses down without a tree. But they'll learn. It's my opinion, the women-folk have all gone mad about fashion; and it's time for Christians to set their faces against it."

"It wouldn't do a bit of good. If plain skirts and cropped hair were the fashion, all the women would be just as eager to follow it. What is the difference between ruffles and hems, if every one is striving after them? But Betty, I did not hunt you up to discuss dress, but to tell you that to-day is my birth-day."

"Is it, Miss Charlotte? It's to be hoped you're a year wiser than you were this time last August."

"I ought to be. I am getting old, Betty. This

time next year I shall be twenty-five, and will have to take to tea and cats."

"May be not. May be you'll never be any older than you are to-day, at least for a good long time," said Betty, encouragingly. "Some folks do stand still that way, after they get enough age."

"That is an exceedingly wise provision of nature. But, Betty, is it not true that if a girl is not married before she is twenty-five, she is sure to have a visit from his Satanic Majesty on the night of her birth-day? I begin already to be frightened."

"May be that's the reason the girls are anxious to be settled before they get so old. I'd not be frightened if I were you, though, Miss Charlotte; you can do a deal for yourself in a whole year. And if you fail—you're so polite in the way you mention the devil—may be he'll be mannerly to you in his turn."

"I am sure I shall do my best to make him so. But, Betty, you don't seem to believe the superstition."

"I can't say I don't believe it; though I know nothing from experience, for I was married a good while before I was twenty-five. I can testify I saw him—horns and hoofs—before I reached the age you have; and there's many a married woman could say the same, if she told the truth."

"That is hard on the husbands," said Charlotte, laughing; "if I were Mr. Forbes, I would send you away from Gertrude, for fear of your evil influence."

"You'd be wrong then. I'm not for standing between Mr. Geoffrey and his wishes, now-a-days. He'd marry her quickly enough, if she'd have him. But—that's just it. When it made no difference, she was willing enough to have him, and all I could say against it was spent breath. But now, when I drop a word or two in his favor, poor man! she slings in my face everything I ever said against him, though at the time she scarce seemed to heed. Not that I didn't mean them; but things have changed a deal lately."

"What things have changed?" asked Charlotte,—far too eagerly, as she found from Betty's laconic answer:

"Most everything has changed of late."

"Why, Betty, I was thinking only this morning, that I never knew the death of the head of the house bring so little change as dear Mr. Oliver's. To be sure, it is you who make all the difference in the world. Gertrude could not go on living here as she does, if it were not for you."

"Who told you she was going to stay here?" asked Betty, sharply. "That's the way of folks. Fixing for others, where they don't know anything of their affairs."

"But where would Gertrude go, Betty?"

"Where does she wish to go? Would she shut the house up?" asked Charlotte, trying to gain an answer which would help her out of her perplexity.

"I know nothing about the house. Miss Gertrude is enough for one woman to bear in mind, or one man either, as Mr. Geoffrey'd own. If she'd listen to him she'd remain—not as she is, but still she'd be mistress."

"I don't understand. Could not Gertrude continue to live here without marrying Mr. Forbes?" asked Charlotte, evidently puzzled by Betty's manner of treating the matter.

"Other folks might; but the Olivers aren't beggars."

"Of course not, Betty."

"And where would be the difference, if she went on living here if the place isn't hers? She'll not be beholden to Mr. Geoffrey for a home, when she won't have his name."

"Do you mean the place belongs to Geoffrey Forbes?"

"Of course I do. Is it news to you? I didn't think you'd be in the house twenty-four hours, and not find out that much."

"But I always thought the place was Mr. Oliver's," said Charlotte, not noticing Betty's sarcasm.

"Now you're off on a wrong track, which will lead you nowhere. Of course the place belonged to Mr. Oliver, and to his father before him, who was Miss Gertrude's grandfather; so by rights it ought to be hers. But instead, her uncle left it to Mr. Geoffrey."

"But that is a very common way of leaving land, Betty. Men like to keep it in their families. In some countries it always goes to the next male heir."

"Its against the Bible, anyways. Every child knows that when the promised land was divided, Caleb's daughters got their father's share. But folks nowadays know so much better what is right and just than the Bible way."

"It is only Broomielaw which Mr. Oliver left to Mr. Forbes?" asked Charlotte, feeling much more interested in the division of property in her own day, than in the far-off times of Joshua.

"No, it's just everything. If he had asked my advice, I'd have told him if he wished to keep Mr. Geoffrey fair and smooth he had better let Miss Gertrude have her own belongings. But you can't expect a man not to feel for a man. They're different from us in that respect; no doubt this minute you're thinking much more of Mr. Geoffrey's owning everything, than of Miss Gertrude with next to nothing."

Betty had nearly completed her folding. Only two dresses were left now of the pile which had been heaped up on the bed. The trunk was so full, that she had to press down the soft mass to make room for them.

"Do not move, Betty. I will fold and hand these to you," offered Charlotte, rising to make herself useful.

Betty assented, leaning over the trunk, and bearing lightly on the heap, whilst Charlotte was folding.

"No doubt this white dress is the one Gertrude wore last," remarked Charlotte, as she smoothed out the flounces.

"It's the one she wore the day before Mr. Oliver died. You needn't be particular with the folding," said Betty, beginning to be weary of her position.

"Wait a moment; there is—only some dust," she added, as she put her hand into the transparent pocket. Her quick eye had discovered something in it. There was no great harm done, when Charlotte slipped this something into her own pocket, as it had once been her property, and Gertrude did not seem to put any especial value on it.

"We've had dust enough lately," remarked Betty, not perceiving Charlotte's petit larceny. "It's my opinion, if we'd had rain and cooler weather, Mr. Oliver would be alive now. It was hard enough for stronger bodies to get on."

"Good people are taken away from coming evils," said Charlotte, piously.

"They manage to leave a good many behind them," returned Betty, as she locked the trunk.

So Charlotte was thrown back on her enforced idleness. But she had a little more employment for her thoughts than an hour ago.

The employment was not wholly exhausted, even towards evening, when she came out on the lawn, leaving Gertrude still buried among her letters—

"All dead paper, mute and white—

And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against those tremulous hands which loose the string."

Charlotte had wandered down by the garden fence, where the roses were still making a feeble fight against the scorching August suns. They had come out of the conflict to-day rather worsted, drooping and thirsty and pale; yet here and there Charlotte could find a fresher bud that had hidden out of the danger behind some leafy covert, to find a fairer death upon her bosom. True, there was no one to see how prettily the pink bloom took the place of the ribands which Charlotte had discarded as unbefitting the house of mourning; but if the girl were to find herself alone in the Saharan desert, she would have an eye to the possible arrival of some admiring Bedouin. And if Geoffrey Forbes were perchance to ride over, to inquire for Gertrude—

Those were his horse's hoofs, cantering up the lane now.

For these last few days, ever since that interview with Gertrude, Geoffrey Forbes had been

thoroughly uncomfortable. He had been wishing to ride over as usual, and yet he was not sure that it would not be wiser on his part to leave her to herself. If she grew lonely, she might feel glad to see him; but if he went over daily, as had been his wont in Mr. Oliver's time, she would never learn to miss him. To stay away was good policy, no doubt; but its tendency was not to keep him from restlessness.

This evening, he had ordered his horse, intending to take a ride; and he may have forgotten to turn the animal's head where the road diverged; at any rate, he cantered up the lane, and had just turned from fastening his horse, when he caught a glimpse of a lady's dress on the bench under the elm.

His heart beat a trifle faster. He began to fear he had made a mistake in coming over so soon. Gertrude might look upon his visit as an intrusion, and perhaps show this by a chilling coldness. A mighty change had come over Geoffrey Forbes, if he could grow diffident and fearful; and he laughed at himself, not good-humoredly, as at a harmless weakness, but bitterly.

However, the horse was made fast, and he could not very well mount and ride away. Besides, Gertrude had seen him, and had risen, and was coming towards him.

Gertrude?

No, this was a much smaller figure, and was not dressed in mourning, but in pale lilac. Who could it be?

"Oh, Mr. Forbes, I am so glad to see you!" Charlotte Burnley was coming towards him, holding out both hands to welcome him. "Of course you did not expect to see me, for I only came yesterday. Why did not some one write to us? It was such a dreadful shock! Cyril saw the notice of dear Mr. Oliver's death in the paper. He came to tell us at once; and as it was impossible for Aunt Margaret to come down, he made me come instead. Of course I could not tell whether it was best for poor Gertrude, that I should come or stay away. But there is no getting rid of Cyril, if he sets his heart on anything, so I had to come. Dear Mr. Oliver! I did not suppose he was very strong; but I never dreamed that he would die so suddenly. It is well for Gertrude that she has you to look to."

All this came quickly and volubly, so that Geoffrey had time to recover from his astonishment at seeing Charlotte, before her last sentence was ended; and he was able to tell her, what was the truth, that he was unfeignedly glad to see her. Just then he would have welcomed any excuse to return to his old haunts; and where could he find a better one than in riding over to see Charlotte? But he would have preferred that she should have come to Gertrude at any one's bidding, rather than Cyril Elliot's.

"So you approve of my coming," Charlotte continued, after Geoffrey had expressed his gratification. "It is a great relief to me that you do. I assure you I was nervous about it, for Gertrude is unlike most girls. Now that I am here, she has not once spoken of her uncle's death, nor of her future. I suppose it is just as well: people are different. I should, by this time, have decided what I would do for the next ten years. Don't you think it will be best for Gertrude to stay here? Aunt Margaret says it would be impossible, but I can't see why. Betty is dragon enough to keep off tramps, and there is nothing else to fear in the country."

"Gertrude will certainly stay if she wishes," said Geoffrey, shortly.

He was angry at finding Gertrude's friends already speculating about her future. What would they say when Mr. Oliver's will was known?

"Of course she will wish to stay. I have heard her say more than once how dear the old place is to her. Aren't you coming in?" she added, finding Geoffrey no more inclined to discuss Gertrude's affairs than was the girl herself.

"Not this evening. I only rode over to inquire for Gertrude; but she is in such good hands, she will not need a visit from me."

"I am by no means sure of that. You will find her in the study if you will go in. She was too busy to speak to me, so I came out to walk. But she may be disengaged by this time."

"Perhaps I had better not disturb her, but go with you," said Geoffrey, with some hesitation.

"Oh, by no means. Gertrude would be disappointed. She was occupied by family papers, and of course I could not help her—but you can, no doubt. I can't think of letting you go with me."

Did Charlotte know the attraction which exists in forbidden paths, or was she wholly surprised that Geoffrey was walking on with her? The truth is, he was decidedly doubtful of the expediency of interrupting Gertrude over her mournful task; and Charlotte came to him like a soft breeze with a breath of the pale rose hidden out of reach.

It jarred on him, therefore, when he found that the breeze had other secrets to whisper than those of the rose. As they crossed down by the branch, Charlotte drew something from her pocket.

"Is this the way you keep my confidences?" she asked, holding up to him the note he had given Gertrude to read. "I thought you men were to be trusted."

"Where did you find it?" asked Geoffrey, intending by the question to evade a reply.

"Perhaps you lost it," said Charlotte; and certainly it did look stained and ill-used enough to warrant the supposition. "I don't know what

Cyril would say, should he hear of my indiscretion. He dislikes so much to have his affairs known."

"I wonder you endure his impertinence," remarked Geoffrey.

"Oh, we women are born to endure. Even if we rebel, we are sure to come to terms, if you are moderately patient."

"Do you really think that?" asked Geoffrey, eagerly.

"Of course I do. We grow very weak and yielding, if long left to ourselves. Loneliness, like famine, is sure to subdue the haughtiest spirit. I ought to speak with authority, for I know no one more alone in the world than I, unless it is Gertrude."

After that, it was no longer hard to hold Geoffrey's attention; and though they sauntered for an hour through the woodland paths, Geoffrey did not find it long.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

[Written expressly for Godey's Lady's Book.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ.

Authors of "Ingremisco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

"A milk-white lamb that bleats
For man's protection."

Charlotte stayed some weeks with Gertrude, making herself especially useful to Geoffrey, not only as a companion, but as an excuse for his frequenting the house. Gertrude had grown restless when not out of doors. She flitted from room to room, leaving Charlotte and Geoffrey abruptly, and not returning for hours. Charlotte was thankful for her own power of sitting still, which, it must be confessed, was less irksome when Geoffrey was in the house than during his absence.

The warm summer weather was well-nigh over, when Gertrude began to show much interest in finding a new home for herself; declaring she must make her arrangements for leaving the old one before winter set in. It was Geoffrey's own fault that she was so constantly searching among the house advertisements in the papers. If he could have forgotten his old rôle of lover, and instead tried that of considerate cousin, Gertrude might not have thought of going. But he could not or would not forget; and she felt that when Charlotte went away, it was far better she should also.

The question was, where? Betty said "anywheres," when Gertrude consulted her; but she said it gloomily and reluctantly, and had no advice to offer. She had lived so long at the old place, that she had forgotten there was any other spot in the whole world. It was thirty years since Betty had taken possession of Mr. Oliver's keys; she was a young woman then, outwardly

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in weeds, inwardly well pleased at having been called upon to bury Jeremiah Brown, although by no means all memory of him, and once more work for her daily bread. But her subsequent life had not fitted her for contact with the world, nor for giving advice, out of her own especial province.

It was Charlotte who was the really serviceable one, not merely for advising, but for acting. After one strong effort on her part to make Gertrude listen to what she called reason—which effort proved a rather inglorious failure—she became as busy as if she were the president of an emigrant society. The truth was, she had a decided talent for business, which she was compelled to suppress on her own account, but which she was not at all averse to use for the benefit of others. She had not turned traitor to Geoffrey in thus offering to assist Gertrude. She intended to furnish him with timely warning of his cousin's movements, though she did not think it wise to give an alarm which might prove the cry of wolf, when in fact there was no danger.

Geoffrey was away from home; a business call, he said, which would not detain him more than a few days. Gertrude was busily going over the house, evidently intent upon obliterating every trace of herself as occupant of her old home. And Charlotte, slightly dull and stupefied, being left so much to herself, suddenly determined to make a short journey to a village highly recommended as a most desirable place of residence for any one who wished to combine economy with good society and a central position on a railroad.

Gertrude demurred at the thought of Charlotte's going alone, and proposed her taking Betty. But that was not exactly what Charlotte wished. It would be time enough for Betty to go, if the place should suit; which was decidedly doubtful. As for the distance, Charlotte would only be gone for the day. Besides, she had friends in Grafton, with whom she would dine; and she hoped to re-

the evening with some as practical fruits as the grapes from Eshcol.

Grafton was in the opposite direction from that which Geoffrey had taken, so there was no reason to fear meeting him. Altogether, the journey would be pleasant, and the house-hunting quite exciting, after the monotony of country life.

There could be nothing more admirably business-like, than the manner in which Charlotte set about her search for a house in Grafton. She found only one for rent in the village. She went over the rooms, carefully jotting down on an ivory tablet the size and number of windows, and some bits of observation which she thought Betty would consider practical.

At last, to the relief of the landlord, Charlotte declared herself satisfied and ready to go. He gave with much good will the necessary instruction as to the whereabouts of her friends; for his dinner-hour had arrived, and his appetite was more clamorous than his cupidity, or he might have pressed for a decided answer, since he never doubted for a moment that she was looking at the house for herself.

It seemed to be the dinner-hour of the whole village also, judging from the deserted streets. Charlotte thought that might be the normal condition of all country towns, and that no one walked because there was nothing to be seen. She wondered if Gertrude might be content amid such stagnation, economizing on less a month than she, thanks to her aunt's bounty, would expend on a dress. Charlotte felt inclined to advise Geoffrey not to oppose this whim of Gertrude's; for no doubt such a trial flight would tire her wings for all other flying.

Occupied with thoughts of Gertrude's future, Charlotte quite forgot the directions she had received as to the various turns to be made in order to reach her friend's house. The street she was walking in was by no means illimitable; for she could see, not very far ahead, green fields and a vision of the country. There was no one in sight, of whom to make an inquiry; so she passed round the next corner, hoping to meet some one who could answer a question.

She had certainly found the court end of the village; for here the houses had far more pretension to style and comfort than any she had seen before, and—well, thank heaven, there was a man! He was at some distance, but she could see he wore a straw hat, and was sauntering as if in no haste.

Charlotte at once quickened her steps. She always preferred to ask a question of a man, if she wished for information. Men were certainly more inclined to be civil than women, and did not object to stopping a moment to explain.

She soon discovered she was in pursuit of a gentleman; and as she neared him, there seemed something familiar about the figure—a lazy pe-

culiarity in the walk, which she was sure she recognized. To be sure, it might be only one of those odd likenesses of figure and gait, which the first glance at the face would dispel.

Curiosity, as well as necessity, prompted Charlotte to give chase. Once she stopped, thoroughly perplexed—then broke into an eager run, which caused her to be quite without breath when she at last laid her hand on the man's arm.

He must have been a stranger in the place, for he turned with much evident surprise at being so decidedly stopped; surprise which doubled when he caught sight of Charlotte's flushed face, and called her name.

"Cyril, what in the world are you doing here?" was Charlotte's breathless question.

"What are you? is much more to the purpose."

"Oh, I came on business. Not of my own. Something for Gertrude," returned Charlotte, still panting slightly from her unusual exertion.

"Gertrude! What business can Gertrude have here?"

"I might ask you the same question," said Charlotte, intending if possible to evade a reply.

"I can easily answer you. I am staying near here with a friend."

"Is there good country society in the neighborhood?" asked Charlotte with interest.

"Good enough, no doubt. I know nothing of it, however, having only arrived here last night. How in the world did you get here, Charlotte?"

"I have friends here. The Mercers. Don't you remember them?—girls who had a remarkable fancy for white muslin dresses and square dances."

"I thought you said you were here on business for Gertrude?"

"Did I say so?" returned Charlotte, wishing she had not mentioned Gertrude's name. It was the surprise of seeing Cyril which threw her off her guard.

"Certainly you did. You might as well tell me what interest Gertrude has here."

"I don't think I can. It is Gertrude's own affair; nothing you would care at all to know."

She began to walk leisurely on, and Cyril fell in with her pace, as he rejoined:

"Which means my curiosity is impertinent, and not to be gratified. I am glad to meet you, at any rate; I want you to take a message to Gertrude. You must give me your promise as solemnly as if you pledged it at my death-bed. I believe such oaths are considered particularly binding."

"Cyril, what nonsense! I shall promise nothing of the kind. Gertrude would not listen to me. She would turn away at the first mention of your name. She always does."

"Don't warn her, then. You are clever enough to find some way to make her hear. She is not

Geoffrey Forbes's wife. She need not refuse a last word from me. I have thought it better for me not to see her; but if you advise that, instead of a message, why, it is really none of Forbes's business, I suppose."

Cyril spoke quite coolly, as if he had decided upon the best plan of procedure.

"If you wish it very much, I will take your message," said Charlotte, quickly. "It might be unpleasant for you to meet Mr. Forbes, and you could scarcely help doing so if you went to see Gertrude; he is constantly at the house. Certainly he has no special liking for you."

"I don't see why. The successful lover ought not to be the jealous one. That should be my rôle."

"What do you want me to say to Gertrude?" asked Charlotte, abruptly. What Cyril said was disagreeable to her; besides, she had determined to deliver as much of his message as in her judgment was prudent.

"Tell her I am going to leave the country, because I find it impossible to keep away from her. Every day the temptation just to see her grows greater and greater, until I have come to the conclusion that it is wisest to put the ocean between us. I don't know that I shall ever return," he added despondingly. "I am sure I see no reason to."

"Good heavens, Cyril! how melodramatic you are! Of course it is better for you to go away for a time; but you need make no vows as to your staying away. It would be exceedingly disagreeable to Gertrude to hear anything of the kind."

"It would be fully as disagreeable to me to look forward to meeting Mrs. Forbes," said Cyril, bitterly.

"Gertrude will be as any other woman to you this time next year."

"Judging by my previous efforts to make her so, I confess I am not hopeful of succeeding. Certainly there is not much prospect of doing so, when the slightest excuse would serve for my seeing her."

"I never expected such a bit of sentimentality from you," said Charlotte, flushing angrily. "It is nonsense to talk of giving up your country, and every chance of leading a useful life, for a girl you say cares nothing for you."

"Did I say that?" asked Cyril, quickly. "But if I did, I no doubt spoke the truth. Only, I might have said, too, she does not care any more for Geoffrey Forbes. But you need not add that to my message, Charlotte."

"Indeed, Cyril, I can't think of giving it to Gertrude. You are almost pledging yourself to perpetual exile."

She has turned slightly aside, and Cyril does not see her face. Nor has he caught the faint quiver in her voice, but answers her:

"It does sound very dreadful. Such a useful citizen lost to his country,"

"You could make yourself useful, Cyril. There is no reason why you should sacrifice your whole life."

"I don't intend to sacrifice it. On the contrary I am making an effort to make the most of it."

"I was sure, Cyril, you were not going to be weak and selfish, but would get over this feeling. You will be sure to be—to be contented after awhile," said Charlotte, eagerly.

"I don't know what you mean by contented. If you think I will go back to my old mode of life, you are wrong. I never was much enamored of its frivolity. Or if you think I will find another woman to love, you are just as mistaken. All I wish or hope, is to put Gertrude away from my life as we do our dead; to realize the fact that she is happy without me, and that I must live without seeing her. I shall not try to forget her. It would be small comfort to me to look forward to forgetting Gertrude, and loving some one else."

"You say so now—" began Charlotte.

"And hope to say it always. It is very kind in you to attempt to comfort me, but I don't think you quite understand me. You have thought of me so long as an easy-tempered, good kind of fellow, you can scarcely give me credit for very much feeling. I don't blame you, for I did not know myself until now. One heavy loss makes us count up what we have, which a gain seldom does. I have found myself wonderfully poor since I lost all hope of Gertrude."

"O Cyril," exclaimed Charlotte, "You must not decide so hastily that there is but one love in your life. Surely, in this great world, there is some one capable of loving you as much as Gertrude could have done; one who would willingly devote her life to making you happy."

Who shall interpret for the girl? The quiver in her low tone fails to, to his unhearing ear; and she dares not lift up her wet eyes, as, if she were but acting a part, she might.

"If I failed in making the only woman I tried to, love me—and heaven knows I tried my utmost," said Cyril, bitterly, "I can scarcely hope to succeed where I shall make no effort."

"Ah, but some of us are over-easily caught. Propinquity, or a very little attention, goes a great way with some of our sex."

"Then you will have to prepare Aunt Margaret for what she has always had a horror of, and that is a foreigner. She will like one less as a niece than in any other relation, unless in that of nephew," said Cyril, speaking in his usual light way.

"Why can't you take us abroad with you?" asked Charlotte, eagerly. "It will be a fearful trial to Aunt Margaret, to have you leave her for an indefinite time."

"It would be a much greater one to her to set off on a journey with me. I am very much obliged to you for the offer, but I won't tax either of you to the extent of following me over the world."

"When do you think of going, Cyril?"

"Next week."

"Next week?" Why, this is Thursday! You can't mean to leave so soon?" asked Charlotte with energy.

"Why not? It does not take me a month to get ready, as it does you women."

"I will scarcely have a chance to see you again," she said, thoughtfully.

"None at all. We will have to say good-bye now; that is, if we say it at all, which I am by no means anxious to do."

Charlotte's brow contracted as if in sudden pain. It was some minutes before she spoke again, and then it was quietly and naturally. "Is it because Gertrude is to marry her cousin that you go away, Cyril?"

"For some such reason."

"Not because she refused to marry you—twice, I think you said. You are not a man to be hovering round a girl who does not care for you. Rather than let you make such a sacrifice as to go away altogether, I will tell you something, although Gertrude may not thank me for my breach of confidence. She has broken off her engagement with her cousin—why, you had better ask Mr. Forbes."

"Broken her engagement! You might have told me that before, instead of trying to reconcile me to my loss."

"There is to be no wedding, though Gertrude is a heavy loser by the act," Charlotte said, not caring to notice his reproach.

"Is Forbes's love such a weighty thing?" asked Cyril, scornfully.

"I was speaking of dollars, not love. Mr. Oliver left everything he had to Geoffrey Forbes. Gertrude talks of coming here to reside, and sent me to look for a house for her."

"Will Forbes let her leave? I did not think he would be such a contemptible—"

"Never mind calling him names," interrupted Charlotte. "Mr. Forbes has done his best to be generous and kind to Gertrude, but you know how proud she is. Do you still intend to sail next week, Cyril?"

"Certainly not. I wonder you should ask such a question," he returned, curtly.

Charlotte dropped her lids over what she was conscious were two very eager eyes that were looking up at him.

"You need not jeer at my silliness," Cyril added, good-humoredly; "if I acknowledge I am not quite as dead to all happiness as I thought I was; indeed, I am not sure that anything now could give me pain."

"I don't understand."

"I don't expect you to," said Cyril, coolly. "You are not in love with Gertrude."

"My poor Cyril! Because Gertrude refuses to marry her cousin, is that any reason why she should prefer you?"

"Not precisely a reason. But as she is free, I have at least a chance to win her."

"Not the shadow of a chance, I am afraid." Charlotte gently shook her head. "Gertrude has promised not to marry unless her cousin consents."

"That I don't believe," said Cyril, decidedly. "That Forbes should strive to bind her in that way, I can well understand; but that Gertrude would submit, is impossible."

"But she has submitted," returned Charlotte, with animation. "You need not be doubtful, for I have it from the very best authority."

"I should only believe it from Gertrude's own lips," said Cyril, hotly.

"Precisely; I would ask her, if I were you, and then you will be sure that our authority is the same."

"Gertrude told you?"

Charlotte was not inclined to answer, but such angry, questioning eyes were not to be trifled with, so she nodded a yes.

"What can she mean?" Cyril asked, beneath his breath.

"That she does not care for you. I cannot think that she would break her engagement with her cousin on your account. She would hesitate a long while before doing such a dis—"

"No matter about your definition of Gertrude's act," Cyril said, shortly.

"Disagreeable. I am sure it must have been disagreeable to Gertrude, or she would never have made Mr. Forbes the promise she did," Charlotte hastened to add.

"She certainly was thinking very little of me," was the bitter rejoinder.

"And yet you can go on loving her!" Charlotte cried out, passionately. She was looking at him, her eyes glittering, the blood mantling in her cheeks. "I almost wish I had been silent, and had let you go. If I had not been foolishly sorry for you, you might still be groping in the dark. I wish I had not spoken, and had let you go; O Cyril, I am sure it would be better for you in the end."

"I am sorry I cannot agree with you," said Cyril, coolly. "On the contrary, I am ever so much obliged to you for stopping me from making a consummate ass of myself, running away from a shadow. Even if Gertrude does not care for me, it is a comfort for me to know she is not going to marry Forbes; so pray do not regret your confidence."

By this time they had reached the edge of the town. Before them stretched a long, dusty turnpike, not very inviting as a walk.

"Do your friends live in the country?" asked Cyril, abruptly.

"No, I don't know where they live. I was only going to dine with them; but I fear I have talked my appetite quite away. I wonder if there is an earlier train than the one that leaves here at five o'clock?" she asked, as she turned to retrace her steps.

"There is a way-train, a tedious affair which stops at all the stations on the road. You won't gain much time by taking it."

"I shall not mind the stopping as much as the waiting here. I would much rather go in it," she said, decidedly.

"You will have to make haste, then," returned Cyril, consulting his watch. "You have no time to lose, but had better return to the station, now."

Charlotte was glad to hurry on. She did not care to resume the conversation, though she would willingly have learned what Cyril intended to do with himself, now that he had given up the idea of leaving the country. She glanced up once or twice into his face, furtively, trying to find in it some hint of what he was thinking. But she failed to read anything in its quiet expression, except that he was not altogether miserable.

They were just in time to catch the train; a moment longer, and they would have been too late. "If you can find yourself a seat, I will get your ticket," Cyril said as he placed her in the car.

A minute afterwards he handed Charlotte her ticket through the window. He had no time to bring it to her. The bell was ringing, the engine whistling, and Charlotte saw Cyril standing on the platform, his hat in his hand waving adieu. And then she was rushing on her return journey at railroad speed.

Charlotte pushed her hat from her forehead, as if it ached, and leaned her head on the back of the seat, closing her eyes wearily. She was not sleeping, but going over again and again what she and Cyril had said to each other. "I have lost him," she told herself. "Even if Gertrude does not win him, there is no chance of his turning to me. Aunt Margaret will be sorry, and will be sure to think it my fault. One can't do more than one's best, I am sure. If I had let him go abroad, as he proposed, it would have been no better."

She was not conscious that the tears were slowly rolling down her cheeks, though the man opposite saw them, and thought they were shed for Cyril, whom he had seen bowing his farewell to her. He half envied the young man for whom so pretty a girl could cry. He did not know how sorry Charlotte was for her aunt's disappointment, for which, of course, she was crying, and not for Cyril, who was in love with another girl.

"A wilful man suld be unco wise."

Geoffrey arrived by the up-train ten minutes before Charlotte's way-train was due. He had returned two days earlier than he was expected; the natural consequence of which was that there was no one to meet him, and he had a walk of four miles before him—a walk he by no means enjoyed in prospective.

Just as Geoffrey had come to the conclusion that what was inevitable might as well be gotten over, relief came in the shape of the carriage from Broomielaw. Old Juniper, the most punctual of men in his own estimation, and the least so in reality, as he was always an hour ahead of time, drove up leisurely.

"Whom are you expecting, Juniper?"

"It be n't only Miss Burnley, Mars' Geoffrey. She's not to be here for an hour yet, but I thought I'd manage to give the horses time to breathe a bit before I drove them back."

The horses did not look out of breath, but they did not object to the hour's waiting as did Geoffrey. An hour's walk, he decided, was not half so tedious.

But just then the way-train came slowly up, and Geoffrey turned to watch it. He felt no especial interest in the train, but stood looking at it with that idle curiosity which causes almost every one to stop when the cars pass by.

Charlotte was looking out of the window, inwardly annoyed by the thought of the long time she would have to wait for the carriage. It was with an exclamation of pleasure that she hailed the sight of Juniper's stolid, ebony face; an exclamation which died from her lips when she saw Geoffrey Forbes also standing there. He was the last person she cared to meet just then. She was tired, had a headache, and felt disinclined to talk any more that day, she said to herself; which meant that she was baffled, defeated, routed, and had by no means decided what she should say or do under such circumstances.

The general who collects his broken forces and skillfully covers his retreat, is often a better soldier than the victor. He has not much time, however, for rest or even for thought, and must do his best on the spur of the moment.

Charlotte had to gather up her flagging energies, and give a little start and a welcoming smile as Geoffrey caught sight of her and came forward to help her from the car.

"You here?" she asked, holding out her hand. "I thought you would not return until the day after to-morrow."

"I finished my business sooner than I had expected," Geoffrey answered, indifferently. "Have you been absent long?" he asked, with augmented interest.

"Only for the day. I left here in the eight

o'clock train. Ah, there is old Juniper! How glad I am to see his solemn face. I thought I was a prisoner here for an hour at least."

"Which reminds me to ask for a seat in the carriage."

"It is scarcely worth while to make such a request," said Charlotte. "I would not like to tell Gertrude that I met you plodding along on the road; she would think I had learned very little country courtesy as yet."

The idea that Geoffrey was asking for a seat in his own carriage, amused Charlotte, though she did not care to irritate him by speaking of it. Geoffrey was strangely irascible at any mention of his being master at Broomielaw.

Charlotte leaned back in a corner of the carriage, as if tired out. She left Geoffrey his choice of a seat opposite or beside her, and then seemed to forget his existence. She was glad that some man had successfully buttonholed him, and was thankful for every minute he was detained.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," said Geoffrey, taking the vacant seat next Charlotte, and catching sight as he did so of the weary, listless face. "Some men will detain you, no matter where they find you. Mulford is one who would stop you at his father's funeral, if he chanced to remember he had any business with you. There was no use in my hinting that a lady was waiting for me."

"I did not mind waiting. I hope you did not hurry on my account," Charlotte said, making a slight effort to suppress a yawn.

"He was not to be hurried. Have you been far to-day?" asked Geoffrey, his curiosity about her movements returning.

"I don't know how many miles Grafton is from here, but I have been there most of the day," answered she, quite frankly.

"I did not know you had friends at Grafton," returned Geoffrey, still feeling suspicious as to Charlotte's movements.

"Oh yes, the Mercers live there; have you never heard me speak of them? One of them is very pretty, and sings delightfully."

"You went to spend the day with them?" inquired Geoffrey.

"I had not time to stay long. I have spent most of my day in the cars."

"But you saw your friends, or friend?"

"I saw my friend, and we had a long walk and talk, which is always supposed to be a felicity to a girl."

Somehow Geoffrey felt baffled, though Charlotte had given him straight answers enough. His face may have shown his dissatisfaction, for she said, looking up at him with a laugh:

"Now you see what a very convenient thing to handle is truth. It is so India-rubber-like that you can compress it into an absolute nothing, or make it cover much more than is necessary."

"I have never discovered such adaptability in truth," said Geoffrey, gravely.

"Have you not? Then you, know very little of its qualities. For instance, I have been to Grafton, and have had a long talk and walk with my friend, just as I told you. That is the truth very much compressed. Now, to expand it slightly: I did not go for my own pleasure, but on a trifle of business for Gertrude."

"Business!" repeated Geoffrey.

"Decidedly business. My expanded truth seems to interest you, so I might as well try the effect of a full confession. I have been looking for a house for Gertrude. Quite a friendly act on my part."

"I cannot agree with you," said Geoffrey, stiffly. "I don't perceive any act of friendliness in such a proceeding. It is far better for Gertrude to stay where she is, and she knows perfectly well that I expect it of her, and would be exceedingly mortified and hurt if she even thought of leaving. It is her own fault if the place is not hers in her own right."

"I rather think you have given her several notices to quit," replied Charlotte, coolly. "The last one was when you pressed upon her your wish to marry her. When the owner of a property asks much more than you can honestly give, it is equivalent to saying you had better go. Gertrude has refused your price, I fancy, as she has been thinking of a new home."

"If you had given me some hint of this, I could have remonstrated with Gertrude, and—"

"Just the worst plan in the world," interrupted Charlotte. "Never remonstrate unless you have some authority to fall back on. If you could lawfully keep Gertrude from leaving your roof, by all means try persuasion before exerting harsher means. But as you cannot compel her to stay—"

"At least you need not be the one to further her leaving," interposed Geoffrey.

"But I have done nothing of the kind. I merely went to Grafton to look at a house, instead of letting Gertrude go herself, or send Betty."

"Perhaps you did not find the place suitable," suggested Geoffrey.

"On the contrary, Gertrude might search the world over, and not find anything as desirable. It is wonderfully economical, which she tells me is of the first importance. I understood why the Mercers have such a preference for French muslins. One could wear them at Grafton after they had been done up, without a feeling of annoyance. The house, too, I went to look at, was very comfortable, and in excellent repair."

"I suppose you took it, as everything suited so admirably," Geoffrey said, with suppressed wrath. Charlotte shook her head.

"You are to report its unusual advantages, then."

"I don't intend to mention one of them. In-

stead of being angry with me, you ought to feel much obliged to me for undertaking the troublesome business in your interest. If Gertrude had gone to Grafton instead of me, she would have closed the bargain at once. Betty is more cautious, and would have returned with the refusal of the house. Whereas, I will not give it a second thought."

"After all, it will be but one place less for Gertrude to choose from, and the next time she will probably go herself."

"If you would only be a little more judicious, Gertrude might very well stay where she is."

"I have no intention of annoying her again," said Geoffrey eagerly. "I don't intend even to speak of our future, at least for a long time. You could well let her know I will not."

"If you could only be depended upon. But it would require only some slight provocation to make you either angry or jealous. Gertrude will have small comfort with her landlord only three miles from her. Mr. Forbes, will you be shocked if I suggest that you should shut the door of Broomielaw on yourself?"

He looked at her in surprise.

"That is not like your usual clear-sightedness, Miss Charlotte. It would only annoy Gertrude, for the whole neighborhood would ring with reports that we had quarrelled, and of course Cousin Oliver's will would be considered good grounds for a breach."

"Oh, I don't mean that I would stand outside of the closed door in the sight of the neighbors. If I were you I would go away for a time."

"Go away," repeated Geoffrey, as if not comprehending her meaning.

"Yes, I would give Gertrude a chance to miss me."

"Has she missed me these three days?" he asked eagerly, and then looked annoyed at himself for the question.

"You scarcely gave her time. If I could only persuade you that a woman's judgment is worth something, I might venture a suggestion."

"Indeed, I think much of a woman's judgment, especially of yours," said Geoffrey, blandly. "But in personal matters one can generally judge best for oneself."

"Yes, for oneself; but where there is another implicated, and that other a woman, one is not so sure. Men are apt to forget, if absent from us. But we are very different. If you went away, I would be constantly wondering where you were, and when you would come back. Gertrude would dwell on the sacrifice you are making for her. She is just the girl to think overmuch of self-sacrifice; possibly because she is capable of it, and therefore knows its cost. Though for my part, I imagine self-sacrificing people enjoy being uncomfortable, or expect a gain in the end."

"Where would you recommend me to go? It is not so pleasant to be wandering about, regardless of place or time."

"To Europe, if I were you. It is not really any farther than many places in this country, but it sounds immense to rustic ears. To put the ocean between you seems almost like death; and yet in reality it is a mere nothing."

"It would be a very inconvenient nothing to me just now."

"I would overlook the inconvenience. You could depend upon hearing of Gertrude through me, and I will promise to sound a quick alarm if a rival presents himself."

"I should be free from that fear," said Geoffrey, confidently. "Gertrude is bound by a promise to give me no rival until I permit her to do so."

"You told me that once before, but I really did not think you were in earnest," said Charlotte, with such an innocent look in her clear, hazel eyes, that Geoffrey never dreamed she not only believed it, but had acted on it. "How admirably unselfish you men can be! If you will not marry me, you shall not marry any one else, you say to us; never heeding that the alacrity with which we give up all lovers to get rid of one is not altogether complimentary to the one."

"We would keep you, if possible, from being utterly heartless," said Geoffrey, with a grim sort of smile.

"Gertrude ought to be very much obliged to you for taking so much trouble to preserve her morals. But take care of your own; seven fathoms' depth of salt water is proverbial for drowning an old love."

"I have not promised I would try your plan yet," said Geoffrey curtly.

"Oh, of course not. I never asked you for a promise. I warned you that a girl's counsel was cheap, and therefore by many considered worthless."

"I shall think of yours in spite of your warning. There is much shrewd common sense in what you have said," returned Geoffrey, condescendingly.

"You will let me know what you determine upon?"

"Certainly. In the mean time, it would be just as well if you adhered to your first decision, not to give a favorable report of the house at Grafton. If I determine to put the Atlantic between us for awhile, Gertrude could not possibly object to staying at Broomielaw whilst I am away. And now I will say good-bye, for I won't go up to the house," added Geoffrey; and he called to Juniper to stop and let him out at the lane gate.

"You don't mind the walk home?" asked Charlotte.

"No, I am much obliged to you for bringing me thus far. I prefer to walk the rest of the way, and I will think over what you have said."

"Remember, I only give my suggestion for what it is worth." Charlotte was bending forward to Geoffrey, as he stood on the ground fastening the carriage door.

"Do not think I will blame you, even if I take a false step," answered Geoffrey, in a low voice, conscious of the proximity of Juniper. "After all, you women are better for suggesting than advising. You are much too timid for the latter."

Charlotte fell back into the corner of the carriage. A smile hovered on her mouth, which she did not care that Geoffrey should see. She was so well aware that a suggestion was much better from her lips than advice, that she had taken considerable trouble to give it to him in that desirable form. A suggestion, he might chance to act on; advice, he would be sure to resent as superfluous.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Here at the portal thou dost stand,
And with thy little hand
Thou openest the mysterious gate
Into the future's undiscovered land."

The next morning, Charlotte happened to be on the porch when Geoffrey rode up. The coincidence was not at all remarkable, if Geoffrey had understood that Charlotte's chamber-window had a view down the lane, and that that young lady was blessed with a pair of eyes as remarkably far-sighted as bright. She had been writing at her window that morning, not so engrossed with her occupation that she had not kept a look-out for visitors. Indeed, she was as much on the alert as was ever Fatima's sister Anne, and discovered the cloud of dust some time before the horseman appeared.

"I have decided to go," said Geoffrey, abruptly, as he came up the porch-steps. "I have already written to take passage on the next trip of the Atlantic," he added, showing her a letter which he replaced in his pocket-book.

"I'm sure I hope it is a wise move on your part," replied his pretty confidante, demurely dropping her eyes that Geoffrey might not see the triumphant gleam in them.

"I hope it is. Of course I shall not mail my letter if Gertrude refuses to stay here during my absence. I will have to make a bargain with her. Perhaps it will be best to induce her to believe that it will be for my advantage. What did you do with the Grafton question?"

"Gertrude was sadly disappointed that the house did not suit. She will think it quite lucky, however, if she determines to stay here whilst you are gone."

"Where is Gertrude?" asked Geoffrey, turning to go into the house.

"She is busy with Betty, I believe," replied

Charlotte, following him. "I might as well go upstairs and finish my letters, as I will not be needed here," she added, with a significant nod.

He found his cousin busy, as Charlotte had said, with Betty. She had been all the week going through the closets, as if she intended giving an account of everything to the new master. It was not generous in Gertrude, for she well knew Geoffrey would not care if she spoiled the house of its furniture. Nor could he have understood the feeling which prompted her to be so rigorously just. Only a woman can comprehend the bitterness of seeing what she has always valued and treasured going into the possession of another. Our household gods are so much to us, that many a Rachel uses a device and subterfuge to keep possession of them.

Gertrude and Betty were standing near a table full of old India porcelain. It had been Mr. Oliver's mother's, and only used on great occasions. Gertrude could almost count the number of tea-drinkings her uncle had given, when she had been called upon to preside over the tea-table. She could remember the first tea-party, when Betty had to stand at her elbow to fill the cups, her child-hands not large enough to grasp the teapot. Her uncle had laughed then at his small housekeeper, and had bidden her be careful not to break the cups, which would be hers when she married. She felt tempted to claim them on that promise.

Betty, equally interested, was for tempting her in another fashion. "Throw them out of the window, honey. I've always washed them myself, for fear of a breakage. I wish I had been butter-fingered. There's many a thing we call wise, that we think silly before we die."

"But, Betty, the china—"

"Was your uncle's, and he had a right to leave it as he pleased. That's a text I ought to be perfect in, as often as you've preached from it, Miss Gertrude. As if he didn't think he'd given it to you, when he gave you to Mr. Geoffrey. If you weren't so over proud, you'd ask for it."

"Of course I will not," said Gertrude decidedly.

"I knew you wouldn't. There are some would rather eat from their own loaf, no matter how heavy, than take a slice from another's. I say some folks, for all are not of the same way of thinking."

Gertrude did not seem to think that this remark of Betty's required an answer; so she went on counting the cups.

"If I thought that those who wished to, would sit behind this china, I'd break it to bits with the hatchet," said Betty, energetically.

"Why, Betty!" exclaimed Gertrude, turning round suddenly with astonishment on her face.

"I've mentioned no names, that I know of, so you needn't look scared. Only I've eyes in my

and I'm not one to doubt my own vision. Some folks are silly enough to think a bird can be caught by salt; but the more knowing ones trust more to the use of sugar."

"Are you making ready for a tea-party, Betty?" asked Geoffrey, so unexpectedly that both Gertrude and Betty started as they turned and found him standing in the doorway.

He was sorry for his question as soon as he had asked it; for Betty said, severely:

"We are too decent for such diversions, and Mr. Oliver so lately dead. It's my opinion, if folks have no heart, they'd better try to look as if they had."

"Come with me to the parlor, Gertrude. I want to speak to you," said Geoffrey, hastily.

Gertrude shook her head. "Betty has not done with me."

At last Geoffrey had to tell her plainly that it was something important he had to say to her. His words were not plainer than her reluctance to go with him. He had taught her to fear a tête-à-tête; to fear his urging upon her something more than she could grant. If she had known that this was to be their last interview, she would have hurt him just as much with her alacrity, as she did with her unwillingness.

Geoffrey led the way to the parlor, Gertrude following leisurely. The room was darkened, and she took some little time in raising the blinds and throwing open the shutters. Either the glare was disagreeable, or the thought struck her that there might be too much light for the occasion, for she immediately drew in the shutters nervously. Geoffrey, standing by the mantel, seemingly waiting patiently for her to give him her attention, was as a rebuke; so she let the blinds alone, and came nearer to him, sitting on a chair as much as possible in shadow.

"I have come to a very sudden determination, Gertrude," said Geoffrey, abruptly. "I intend to go abroad; how long I shall remain away, I cannot tell; but for a long time, no doubt. I do not expect my movements to interest you very much, and have not disturbed you merely to tell you of them."

Notwithstanding Geoffrey's assertion that he did not expect Gertrude to be interested in his movements, he was bending forward with much eagerness for a view of his cousin's face, in the hope, no doubt, of seeing some regret expressed there. He drew back disappointed; for he only read surprise in the eyes raised to meet his.

"I have but one drawback to my going, and that is this place," Geoffrey went on to say. "Charlotte Burnley tells me you are thinking of leaving."

She no longer looked at him, and the blood mounted in a vivid blush to her brow. Was her staying at Broomielaw Geoffrey's drawback? Had she been too tardy in her flitting?

It was a moment before she could control her voice enough to say steadily:

"I have been unpardonably slow in my movements. But I intend to leave at once."

"But I thought Grafton did not suit at all, and that you have no place in view," said Geoffrey appalled at her answer. "I cannot very well shut up the house," he added, warily, "and I have not time to find any one to take charge of it."

"I don't think you will have any trouble. No doubt Betty knows some one who would do very well," she answered, coldly.

"But I do not want any one," returned Geoffrey, impetuously. "Cannot you see that I wish you to stay? Is it so much of a favor for you to remain in your old home, that you refuse me, before I even find the words to ask you?"

The blush by no means died out of Gertrude's face; but this time it was shame which dyed it—shame for having done her cousin the injustice to suppose he was trying to be rid of her. It was very difficult for Geoffrey to read aright the contrite voice, and the sudden rush of tears, any more than Gertrude's words, which somehow, in spite of her evident distress, were rather pleasant to him.

"Am I sending you away, Cousin Geoffrey? Are you so loth to see me go, that you will go yourself instead? I did not intend to pain you, and would have consulted you about my leaving, only I feared you would not like it. Charlotte ought not to have mentioned my plans; I am sure she would not have done so, if she could have foreseen the sacrifice you would propose."

Geoffrey winced a little at this. If he had proposed making a sacrifice, it was with the hope of a full reward. But that did not make it the less a self-denial. The holy army of martyrs hoped for the victor's palm, yet suffered in gaining it. And not the least pang in Geoffrey's suffering, was the self-rebuke with which he looked down and saw Gertrude's flushed face, and eyes shining softly on him through her tears. He did not know both flush and tears were caused by the reaction after her unkind suspicions. He almost determined to give up the journey, and trust to Gertrude's being won by proximity, rather than by separation. He hoped she would refuse his request, when he said: "If you refuse to stay here, I must give up going—" and he was half angry at her answer:

"You must not ask me to stay on indefinitely. You might choose to make an exile of yourself on my account. If six months will do, I'll not refuse to stay."

"Say a year, Gertrude. It would suit me better."

He felt chilled that she had acceded so quickly to his proposition.

"Then let it be a year. Not longer, though."

"Believe me I feel the great, great kindness of your thought for me."

"You will think of me whilst I am gone, Gertrude, and you will not forget the promise you made me, not—"

"I hope the past will lie so far behind us in a year from now, that we will forget everything, but that we are of the same blood."

She had risen to her feet as she spoke, and held out her hand.

"When must I wish you a good voyage, Cousin Geoffrey?"

"Not until next week. I could not take passage until I had your consent to stay here."

"Let us go and tell Charlotte," proposed Gertrude; glad to catch sight of her guest from the window. "She will be surprised at the suddenness of your plans."

Charlotte was busily engaged in reading a letter, when Gertrude and Geoffrey joined her on the porch. Either she had reached the end, or was reading it for the second time; for she put it into her pocket as soon as she saw them.

"Aunt Margaret will be in town to-morrow, and wishes me to meet her there," she announced.

She had dropped the envelope of her letter, and Gertrude was about stooping to take it up, but she recognized Cyril's hand-writing in the address, and let it alone.

"You will only be gone for the night? You will return to-morrow evening?" said Geoffrey.

"You are asking too much of Charlotte," interposed Gertrude. "You forget she was in the cars nearly all yesterday."

"My movements will depend on Aunt Margaret," answered Charlotte. "I cannot tell why she sends for me so suddenly. I suppose she is just passing on her way through Baltimore, with a party she wrote something of going north with. I shall not stay in the hot city any longer than I cannot avoid."

Before she left, Geoffrey had arranged to meet her at the evening train on the second day. He was not willing that his only friend and ally should desert him for very long.

Cyril was at the Camden Street depot, waiting for Charlotte, when the train came in.

"How is Gertrude?" was his first question.

"Very well. I never saw her so beautiful. I suppose her mourning is becoming."

"Does Forbes admire her at a distance? or is he often at Broomielaw? Does he persecute her, or let her severely alone?"

"He is behaving quite sensibly. I have a bit of news for you, Cyril. Mr. Forbes is going to Europe."

"The deuce he is! I don't see how his going can benefit me, however," he added on sober second thoughts. "I suppose Gertrude is bound fast enough by her promise not to escape him in his absence."

"I do not think you do Mr. Forbes justice," said Charlotte, gravely. "He is going away solely to keep Gertrude from leaving Broomielaw. He has made her promise to stay for a year, trusting that in that time another arrangement may be entered on to induce her to remain."

"Trusting to her marrying him, I fancy. Well, I am sure I don't blame him for the wish, having the same myself. I do for persecuting her as he does, and trying to keep every one else away from her."

"That is natural enough when a man is of a jealous temperament, like Mr. Forbes. If I were you, I would take a hint from him, and leave Gertrude to herself awhile. A girl naturally likes to be well off with an old love before she is on with the new."

"Was it to give me this bit of advice that you wrote me to fix the day for meeting you?" asked Cyril.

"No, I wished to tell you that Mr. Forbes is to sail next week. But it seems my news is not so pleasant as I thought."

"It ought not to be. Gertrude has shown so very plainly that she does not care for me, that to get rid of Forbes ought not to be a matter of congratulation. And yet, I have not a doubt I shall go down to Broomielaw, and be refused again," said Cyril, frankly.

"I suppose you enjoy the pastime, as you seem bent on it. Gertrude will not object. You are not going to drive to the house with me; it is not necessary. I will go to Broomielaw to-morrow; have you any message for Gertrude? No? You will be your own messenger before long, I suppose."

Whatsoever change came over the girl's face, while, relieved from observation, she went on alone in the carriage, jolting over the streets, it had recovered its usual soft impassiveness when, half an hour later, she was comfortably seated in Mrs. Elliot's dressing-room, absently twirling a large fan, and evidently not paying much heed to a long discourse of Mrs. Elliot's, until the latter said, irritably:

"I wish, Charlotte, you would give me a little of your attention. What I wish to know is, how much longer you intend to bury yourself in the country? I should think the most romantic friendship would be satisfied with the amount of time you have sacrificed."

"I don't think Gertrude need feel under any obligation to me," returned Charlotte, quite coolly. "Nor have I been spending my time idly. In fact, I've had my hands quite full: first to keep Cyril away from Broomielaw, and then to keep Mr. Forbes in good humor."

"It is hardly worth your while to annoy yourself about Cyril's movements. There is no doubt that I must give up all hope of ever seeing you marry him," said Mrs. Elliot, coldly.

if Charlotte started a little, it was not evident in her reply :

"I fear you must, Aunt Margaret; and you must blame yourself for the failure. If you had not brought Gertrude here, it all might have been different."

"I did not think an awkward country girl would have been so formidable," her aunt returned, with some contempt.

"Awkwardness wears off, and a country girl need not be without attraction. Cyril at least will agree with me. However, there is no use in discussing that. Cyril has addressed Gertrude twice, and has plainly told me he will again, though he is sure there is no chance for him."

"Do you mean to say that Gertrude has recklessly broken with her cousin, though by her uncle's will she loses everything by doing so; and then will not accept Cyril?"

"That is the unaccountable fact. You cannot make every girl worldly, Aunt Margaret. But I did not come here to discuss Gertrude's affairs, but to talk a little about my own. Mr. Forbes is going to Europe."

"He is not about to retrench, just after coming into Mr. Oliver's property?" asked Mrs. Elliot.

"He has no need to retrench, I imagine. Of the two, I rather think Mr. Forbes is a richer man than Cyril; at least than Cyril during your lifetime."

"Is it your intention to stay with Gertrude whilst Mr. Forbes is away? If that is what you wish to discuss, I will tell you at once, I consider it both a foolish sacrifice on your part, and a most unnecessary one."

"I never thought of such a thing. Gertrude would not ask me to stay; and if she did, it would not be of the smallest possible benefit to any one. No, Aunt Margaret, I would far rather travel for a year, than spend it in the country."

"I don't think that will be optional with you. You will have to content yourself with your old mode of life, only you will see little or nothing of Cyril. That is your own fault, however, so you cannot complain."

Charlotte did not try to exonerate herself, but simply proposed that as Geoffrey Forbes was going abroad, it would be rather well that she should go also.

"I cannot imagine what you mean, Charlotte," said Mrs. Elliot, looking at her as if the girl had suddenly gone daft. "You surely don't propose to travel under Mr. Forbes' care? And you certainly don't expect me to start off in this way. And 'abroad' is not very definite. A detective might find a man in Europe, but I doubt if two women could."

"A steamship is not beyond our capabilities. Geoffrey Forbes sails in the next trip of the 'Atlantic.'"

"That is next week!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot,

evidently started by the shortness of time Charlotte gave.

"Next week?"

"Yes: I happen to know, for the Winstons sail in her."

"That is ample time for a reasonable woman to make ready in," said Charlotte coolly. "And if you really don't care to go, Aunt Margaret, I could not have a better chaperone than Mrs. Winston. She will be delighted to take charge of me; and as she is the worst of sailors, and always travels with the best of maids from port to port, I shall not have her on my hands."

"But on the other side?"

"Why, then, of course, I shall have to go to Delphine, and Mr. Forbes shall put me in the way of reaching her safely. You know from all our last letters, it is evident poor old Mr. Burger is failing fast; though Delphine herself does not seem aware of it, poor child. You see that nothing could be more eminently proper, than that one of her sisters should go over to her; and so the Winstons and Mr. Forbes will think. I am sure any reasonable person would agree with them."

"Then I am afraid I am not reasonable," answered her aunt.

But Charlotte argued the question patiently and good-humoredly, until she brought Mrs. Elliot round to her way of thinking; indeed, Mrs. Elliot wrote to engage her state-room before that enterprising damsel sat down to indite her letter to Gertrude. Of this act of her aunt's, Charlotte was wilfully ignorant, so of course could not mention it to Gertrude, to whom she only dwelt on her anxiety for Delphine, and its pressure upon her to go for a while to Little Medlington, where she would hear so much more readily.

At last came the sailing-day of the "Atlantic." Geoffrey Forbes did not go on board until the very last moment. He had not looked at the list of passengers, and sincerely hoped there was no one among them of whom he had ever heard before.

The "Atlantic" had steamed down the bay, and passed through the Narrows. Geoffrey was leaning on the bulwark, ionely and regretful now that it was too late to draw back. Could he not have made a lighter sacrifice for Gertrude's comfort? Was it not hard that he should give up his home, for what, after all, was only a bit of over-sensitiveness on his cousin's part? She had no right to be so proud that she would receive nothing at his hands unless he put it in the light of a favor to himself. He doubted very much whether Gertrude would miss him; more than half doubted a step which he had considered clever in the extreme.

Then he began to wonder what Gertrude was doing just then; thought how the sun was shin-

ing on the yellow leaves of the great linden tree, transmuting them to gold—how Betty was just starting to the cow-pen to look after the milking. Then his thought dwelt with Charlotte Burnley; would she stay with Gertrude?

Just then Geoffrey felt a hand laid lightly on his arm. He scarcely cared to turn to see who was so obtrusively anxious to be recognized by him.

"Won't you wish me a good voyage? Are you not glad to see a friend, you most forlorn-looking of men?"

It was Charlotte Burnley's voice. There was not the smallest doubt of what she was about; though, perhaps, Geoffrey Forbes never quite discovered it.

"It is Aunt Margaret's doing. I was wearying so to go to poor Delphine, that she has sent me under the care of an old friend. Is it not charming in her? I have been at Little Medlington, and she never wrote me what steamer she had engaged my passage in—it is so nice that it happened to be yours. I knew you the very minute I saw you on deck, though you were not looking my way. I cannot tell you how long I have wished to cross the ocean. I never thought it would be quite as delightful as it is, though. How perfect the water looks!"

The scene was perfect, and somehow Geoffrey saw it all with very different eyes in the last few minutes. It was not the first time Charlotte Burnley had come to his relief—not the first time he had welcomed her with feelings of real pleasure. There was no more loneliness in store for him, now that he had some one sure of sympathizing with him—some one to whom he could speak freely of himself, which is a wonderful comfort to most of us.

CHAPTER XX.

*"La gloire aïsee
D'entrer dans un cœur de toutes parts ouvert."*

"Thinking of leaving Lauterbrunnen to-morrow!"

Charlotte repeats the words with a very different intonation from that in which they were spoken to her. They were spoken slowly, hesitatingly, half doubtfully; she repeats them in a sharp, startled way, with quick-drawn breath and changing color. And then she recovers herself, and looks up with a faint, wistful smile at Geoffrey Forbes, who is standing beside her, leaning with both hands folded on the trusty staff that had served him in many a mountain ramble with this same companion.

Not that they have been climbing any mountain to-day. They have been sauntering this time through one of those Swiss valley roads, the opening to which, into the woodland, lies like the

mouth of a deep green cavern behind them. At Charlotte's feet, as she sits in the grass on the low bank, the little river goes winding by, with now and then a sunnier ripple round some stone, or a flash and sparkle when a wavelet catches at some drooping branch of tree or shrub on the point of the shore opposite. On this bank neither tree nor shrub just here straggles into the green meadow-sweep, and the yellow-brown shorn corn-field bordering it; but the valley road sweeps round in a spur of woodland, out of which rises a small hamlet with its one square light-tower, by one of those strange freaks of reflection throwing its semblance into the clear stream almost at Charlotte's feet, as if there were no breadth of cornland between. Out from the cavernous mouth of the hidden green road, a peasant and a dappled cow or two emerge, with just that red and blue, that dun and white break in the leafy gloom, which serves to light the picture up. Beyond the hamlet still, where the river-curves are hidden out of sight in the defile, the picture needs no lighting up, indeed; for the high white jagged peaks have caught the first flash of the setting sun, and are giving it back in a hundred changeful opal tints. But the near mountain, where the gray mists brood amidst the scanty crest of pines, and upon which Charlotte has turned her back as she sits at the river's brim, is a great, square, buttressed mass, brown, cleft, and hollowed as by storm, and bare, save for the silver-white lacing of the near water-fall plunging from its summit, and the thread-like line of the second one beyond. Charlotte could have waxed sentimental, and recalled Moore's figure of the parted torrents; but besides that she does not know whether the two streams have ever actually been united, she prefers not to suggest partings just now, and turns her back on them instead. "Thinking of leaving Lauterbrunnen to-morrow!"

Geoffrey's eyes were not upon her when he made that announcement of his purpose; but now they have turned with a furtive, half-reluctant questioning in them. Will it be much to her—too much—that he is going away? She will miss him, of course: in a foreign land one would naturally miss a friend who for a year past has had a trick of turning up at odd moments, or whenever he can be serviceable. But will she miss him more than she ought to miss such a friend?—more than she ought to miss Gertrude Oliver's lover?

Why should he be solicitous for the answer he is seeking in her face? He is seeing it intently, albeit somewhat furtively; and he thinks he finds it in that brave little wistful smile she lifts to him. He winces uncomfortably; under those innocent, appealing hazel eyes, his own fall. Poor little thing, ought he to have gone away before?

The man is no coxcomb, and it is through no overweening vanity on his part, that in the last

few weeks of their seeming chance rencontre in the neighborhood of Lauterbrunnen, it has been dawning upon him that he is something more to Charlotte than a well-met friend. At first the vague sense of this came to him with a pleasurable thrill; but later, when it took shape more distinct and real, the pleasure was mingled with a consciousness of guilt. If the girl love him, Gertrude's lover—

For he is Gertrude's lover still, he says to himself. Gertrude's lover, though her love has been so weak for him that she has been content to let him stay away for a year without one word from her; while this girl, at the mere mention of his going—

Yes; he is going, he says to himself again; the year is nearly out; he will but barely reach Gertrude at its expiration, if he starts to-morrow. She will not care, perhaps; she is not counting the days.

But he will go.

And Charlotte says, looking away from him, just a thought pale, and plucking at the blades of grass with her restless white fingers:

"Yes. I knew—I might have known—you would be going. But—somehow, I did not think—"

Given, a very pretty girl, drooping in a listless way at a hint of parting from you, a shadow stealing across the childish serenity of her face as if a cloud obscured the sunshine, she striving after a child's piteous fashion to keep back the pent-up shower of tears; and what would you do, but just what Geoffrey Forbes does?—throw yourself upon the slope beside her, and put your strong hand over the small trembling fingers, and say gently to the little friend, as Geoffrey says:

"This world is full of hard partings. I shall miss my faithful little friend more than I can tell her."

There is a slight movement of the drooping shoulders—it may have been a sob suppressed—and then she says simply:

"But Gertrude will be so glad."

The hand laid over hers thrills at her speech, and is removed. There is a thrill, too, in the voice that takes up her word eagerly:

"Glad, will she? Has she said so to you? Has she written as if she were expecting me?"

Charlotte lifts a surprised glance to him.

"You know I have always given you Gertrude's letters; they were but two or three, in answer to mine. You see, girls cannot write out all their feelings."

Geoffrey's brow darkens.

"Has she any feelings? at least for me," he breaks in on Charlotte's hesitating speech. "What does she care whether I come or go? Nothing, I often think."

"Oh, Mr. Forbes!"

The deprecating voice tells him so clearly, that

not to care is impossible. The soft assumption is as balm to the man's wounded self-love. He just covers the gentle healing hand gratefully one instant with his own.

"Kind little heart! I am troublesome to come to you so often with my grievances. But the truth is, I feel as though I were drifting away from my sheet-anchor of hope, to leave you behind."

At that, the girl raises her clear innocent eyes to his, and clasps her hands together with a naïve impulse.

"Ah, then don't drift away so suddenly! If you do not think Gertrude will care, if you would just stay two or three days longer, until we could arrange to get away from here to Berne, or somewhere. All the walks, all the rides, all the views, everything, we have shared together: I shall miss you so much here—I and Delphine," she interrupts herself with a blush. "You know," she says slowly, looking away from him across the valley—"You know you have been so kind to Delphine, she has quite learned to depend on you. Bringing me to her as you did, just before poor Mr. Burger's death, and being there at the time, and arranging everything for her; then you have had a way of reappearing every now and then, like a great, strong guardian angel," she says, lifting her eyes to him again with a soft smile in them, "just when we stood most need of you. No wonder we have learned to depend on you too much!"

Now, for a man of Geoffrey Forbes' stamp, there is no flattery so sweet as this same womanly dependence. It is the best persuasion of the pretty little golden spider to walk into her trap of a parlor; and if her coveted prey is no giddy-pated buzzing fly, but grave and ponderous and sober, he is no less to be ensnared. If he does not walk forthwith into her parlor, she is not discouraged by seeing him put his hand into his breast-pocket and draw out a letter which she recognizes at once for Gertrude's last to herself. He has opened and is glancing over it; then with a sudden angry impulse he refolds the sheet written on three sides and tears it across once and again.

"Mind it—Gertrude? Could anything be colder than this note? Some indifferent neighborhood news, a saying of Betty's, a mention of the last new book she is reading, not one mention of me, although you wrote her how we happened to meet."

Charlotte does not flinch under his eyes; why should she further mortify him by owning that she too had neglected to mention him in her letter? She ventures, after a pause, hesitatingly:

"If I might tell you what I think—I would not suggest for the world, you knowing Gertrude so much better than I—"

"I confess I do not know her at all," interrupts Geoffrey, sharply.

"Then I might say, (for girls understand girls best, after all,) I am afraid Gertrude is somewhat too sure of you, Mr. Forbes. A girl falls naturally into the habit of taking a man as a matter of course, like the solid earth she stands on. But where there is a little dubiousness, uncertainty of clear or cloudy weather, she learns the trick of 'looking up, watching for sunshine.'"

Geoffrey is half flattered, half nettled by her figures of speech. It is then evident to others than himself, that he has been trampled on by Gertrude? But then the latter simile—

"You would have us fickle indeed, if we are to veer round like the clouds," he says.

But she shakes her head, laughing softly at him.

"The sky is steadfast enough, the clouds only creep up from below—that is natural philosophy, isn't it?"

For all her playful mockery, there is that in her voice and manner, which implies that the mocking veils some earnestness. It is rather soothing to Geoffrey Forbes, to whom Gertrude's cool ignoring of him has been rasping in no small degree. He says, after another pause:

"What is it you would have me do?"

"Only consider; wouldn't it be better to make her think somewhat more about you, before you went to her? If you were just the least behind time, for instance, her thoughts would naturally be dwelling on your coming; and if there seemed to her some uncertainty about it, she would begin to wonder what she had done, what she had left undone, to cause it. And so when you did appear, she would have learned her own heart all the better."

"That is," breaks in Geoffrey, bitterly; "pre-supposing that she has any heart—for me."

"Yes, of course."

The answer comes quite simply, and she looks up at him in an artless wonder, which shows it is difficult for her to pre-suppose anything else. The blood heightens in Geoffrey's dark face, under that glance, though he answers it with a short, hard laugh. At which, she drops her eyes and turns slightly aside, and adds in a sort of timid haste:

"Of course, I did not mean to suggest your spending the mean time here. Three weeks of Interlacken and Lauterbrunnen are long enough—for a man," she says, with the faintest pause between, and the merest suspicion of a suppressed sigh. "But if you were in Paris, you would find friends there, no doubt, to while away the waiting."

So shrewd as Charlotte is, does she not know that no less attractive programme could be set before him, than Paris and hap-hazard acquaintance there?

"Do you mean, then, to banish me?" he says.

"If you are leaving this neighborhood, or if you

are remaining here a little longer, can I no more be serviceable to you?"

So the pretty spider's invitation prospers; he has blundered into her trap; and, after all, it has not taken a very long stair, if a winding one, to bring him there.

* * * * *

In the fair June days that followed, Geoffrey found Charlotte's parlor indeed a pretty one. It had the bluest and clearest of skies for its ceiling; screens of "the many-folded hills," grandest of mountain views pictured beyond; and everywhere under their pacing feet a carpet of Alpine flowers which furnish Geoffrey texts for many a lesson in botany. Charlotte proved an apter scholar than Gertrude in those far-back Broomielaw days; docile and eager, and looking up to her master with praiseworthy assiduity. She took care to provide variety of entertainment, too, in this summer parlor of hers; there were excursions to be made, rides and climbing parties up to this or that, sennet-hut to be arranged, in a quiet way, for poor Delphine's distraction, with some friends from the hotel who would break up an inconvenient trio; and, above all, there were those quasi tête-à-tête rows on the lakes, with some strong-armed peasant girl for oarswoman facing the two in the stern, and listening blankly while they spoke English together. Not that all the world might not have heard what they were saying, except when Gertrude was softly named by Charlotte, and Geoffrey adroitly drawn into long, confidential talks, in which Charlotte always gently espoused the cause of the absent one, but left Geoffrey doubly smarting under his wrongs, yet with a soothing sense of one sweet woman's sympathy. And somehow, by degrees the wrongs hurt less, albeit the healing balm was becoming all the more necessary to him.

But Charlotte, in this wise as the serpent, if cooingly soft and harmless as the dove, knew better than to let the days go by so quietly that he would be forced back upon continual reminiscence. Two weeks had passed since first he had yielded to the suggestion of delay; and already, Geoffrey had begun to forget the wherefore of that delay, as the hours came and went in that cheerful if not gay variety which Charlotte and he arranged together as most appropriately soothing to Delphine's widowhood.

Of course, in this variety, an excursion to the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons must have its place, and a sunrise on the Righi is a natural consequence.

The long, shrill, echoing blast of the herdsman's horn heralds the approach of Don Phœbus, and awakes the dreamers in the hotel upon the Righi's summit to the fact that they must be

"Up and doing,

With a heart for any fate"

to which those are liable who brave the difficul-

ties of a toilet in the dark, and of blind gropings down ladder-like stairs and through unfamiliar turns and passages. As for the toilets, varied enough are the styles of dress or undress, which moment by moment make a sleepy or an eager exit, out into the chill, gray twilight, where the stars are paling one by one, where piles of cloud-land and mountain merge their indistinct peaks, and where for some moments reigns a silence of expectancy and awe.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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[Written expressly for *Godey's Lady's Book*.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ.

Authors of "Ingremsco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

[As some of our readers may not have read the opening chapters of the serial continued in this number, we give a brief summary of the characters and incidents previously described.

In the "Rosebud Garden" are six sisters, motherless daughters of Mr. Burnley. Margaret loves Roger Gillespie, from whom she parts in the first chapter of the story, he going to South America, while she remains in her home in Little Medlington. An explanation or formal betrothal at parting is prevented by Mr. Burnley, but the two part, lovers.

Charlotte, another daughter, has been adopted and educated by her Aunt Margaret, a woman of fashion in Baltimore, and is in love with Cyril Elliot, a nephew of her aunt's husband, who has fallen in love with Gertrude Oliver, a visitor at Mrs. Margaret Elliot's.

Delphine and Elliot Burnley are twins, and Delphine has married a wealthy old man, Mr. Burger, and gone with him to Europe.

Kate is in love with Ambrose Austin, a "ne'er

do weel" who goes to Baltimore to seek his fortune.

May, the youngest sister, is but a child when the story opens.

Roger Gillespie has an aunt, Miss Alethea, who is a friend of all the girls, and who has another friend in a confirmed invalid, Bessie Archer, a girl who has seemed purified by suffering into a character almost saintly. Dr. Kearney, one of the many physicians of Little Medlington, meets Kate Burnley at Miss Alethea's, and persuades them to introduce him to Bessie Archer, in the hope of being of professional service to her. He succeeds in restoring her to health, and falls in love himself with Kate Burnley.

Bessie Archer, when convalescent, visits in Baltimore, and Ambrose meeting her there, is false to Kate and marries Bessie.

In the town of Little Medlington there appears a little German woman, who, after wandering about unable to make herself understood, meets Elliot Burnley, who speaks German. She is seeking Delphine, and claims herself to be the wife of Frederick Burger. Elliot, who worships her twin sister, persuades the woman to wait to hear from her before making herself known, and before night Dr. Kearney seeks Elliot to tell her the woman is dying and asking for her. She goes with the doctor, and is given a package of letters, which she burns after the woman dies. Some months later, she receives herself a letter, after reading which she endeavors to get some money from her father. Mr. Burnley is seized with a paralytic stroke, and Elliot thinks she has been the cause of his illness. She leaves her home, and all trace of her is lost.

But she has gone to the place of which she is told in the letter, to find the daughter of the German woman, an invalid and imbecile. As atonement for destroying the letters and keeping the secret from Delphine, Elliot devotes her life to this child, supporting her by the work of her own hands, and supplying every want of her illness and enfeebled mind.

Once, looking from her window, she sees Delphine conversing with Dr. Mahlon Mackenzie, who is attending the German girl.

Delphine becomes a widow abroad, and returns to Baltimore.

Gertrude Oliver has for years been engaged to her cousin, Geoffrey Forbes, but accepts an invitation to visit Mrs. Elliot, where she meets Cyril. Geoffrey visits her in Baltimore, is jealous of Cyril, but does not know Gertrude returns his love. Gertrude lives with her uncle, devoted to him as he is to her, and is the supposed heiress to his large estate. But upon his death, her uncle leaves his property to Geoffrey, whom he supposes Gertrude will marry.

In the meantime, Cyril has proposed to Gertrude and been refused. But after her uncle's

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death, Gertrude breaks her engagement, promising, however, not to marry until Geoffrey gives his permission. In order that Gertrude may not leave her home, Geoffrey, by the advice of Charlotte Burnley, goes to Europe; and Charlotte, who has heard of Mr. Burger's dangerous illness, appears on the same steamer. Abroad, she has Geoffrey's companionship for a year, when Cyril unexpectedly meets her. She finds he is still in love with Gertrude, still determined to win her if possible, and after parting from him, she persuades Geoffrey of her love for him, and marries him, returning to America with Delphine.

At the steamer-landing they meet Gertrude engaging a stateroom for a lady with whom she is going abroad as companion. But, freed by Geoffrey's marriage, she accepts Cyril, who renews his offer as soon as he hears she is no longer bound by her promise to Geoffrey.

Delphine, returning to Baltimore a wealthy widow, becomes very popular, and is herself very much interested in Dr. Mahlon Mackenzie, the physician at a new hospital. She is anxious to persuade him to visit at her "at homes," and offers him choice wines for his sick poor.

It is at the door of the house where Elliot is hidden nursing Gretel that Delphine, talking to Dr. Mackenzie, is seen by her twin sister.

The doctor going to visit his patient finds Elliot greatly agitated, but assures her that no wealth could help the invalid, and nothing could be added to the care she already receives; while Elliot, while owning to some wrong done to the child, also adds that she does not repent of it.

At this point our readers can take up the story as it continues in this number.]

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I faith, methinks she is too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise; only this commendation I can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome."

Many Thursday evenings pass, and Doctor Mackenzie has not made his appearance at Delphine's home. To-night it is lighted evidently for more than an ordinary evening reception; there is to be a carpet dance, in honor, as every one knows, of the arrival of a sister of Mrs. Burger's, on a visit to her. The guests have generally assembled, and "Where is your new doctor? Have you not had the courage to send him an invitation?" asks Louis de Lille.

But Delphine only laughs; she will not acknowledge that she has been neglected. "He has not needed any wine yet; when he does he will come," she says to herself.

She is right, for just then she sees Mahlon in the doorway. A faint flush overspreads her face.

"A woman sometimes succeeds," she says.

"A pretty one always—" answers Louis, having forgotten his former remark.

Delphine laughs, and goes forward to welcome her guest.

"Have you come for the wine?" she asks.

Yes, he had come only for the wine; but the sight of Delphine's drawing-rooms makes him loth to ask for it. If he could have demanded of her to sell all that she had, and give to the poor, he would not have scrupled to do so. As it is, the few bottles of wine, so prized awhile ago, seem now the merest mockery of an offering from Delphine to his poor, sick folk.

"You must tell me of your patients, presently," says Delphine promptly; "just now I would like to introduce you to some friends."

She made a judicious choice: overlooking eager glances from pretty eyes, she selects two elderly men interested in the city drainage, and Mrs. Elliot, who through her husband's will is one of the patrons of a new hospital, of which the corner-stone has just been laid, and for the ventilation of which Mahlon has been called upon by the building committee to give his views.

They are not very interesting to his neighbors on the sofa in the alcove, who indeed seem sufficiently occupied with one another just now to be indifferent to the conversation around them. One of them is a bright little old lady, and the other one is Kate.

You could tell it was Kate, even with her back turned toward you, by the quick, impulsive way she has of leaning forward; you could tell it was she, even before she spoke, with a quick glance across at the door, which only opened to admit some stranger.

"Miss Alethea, did you know Delphine has invited them?"

"Them? Whom do you mean?" asks Miss Alethea, unsuspiciously.

Kate laughs, a low ringing laugh, with not a tone of bitterness in it.

"That is just like me, Miss Alethea—finishing my thought aloud, and leaving you to guess the beginning. I mean Bessie and—Mr. Archer. Delphine says they have moved almost next door. I persuaded Delphine that it would look odd to leave them out. Besides, I prefer that they should come."

Miss Alethea says nothing, but she does not like the shifting color in the face turned frankly round on her. It is easy to see that Kate is restless, and Miss Alethea fears, nervous. She wishes she could catch the doctor and tell him her anxiety, and ask him to watch the child. Not Delphine's doctor, whom she hears just now behind her so deep in malaria that it really frightens her to draw in a long breath; but young Kearney, who has taken the trouble to come all the way from Little Medlington to B— just to take care of

an old woman and a young one, who are not used to travel alone.

Here he comes now, while Kate is asking if Miss Alethea did not think the flowers pretty in the hall. "We are to dance in the front drawing-room, and the supper is to be in the conservatory," Kate explains.

All very nice; but Miss Alethea is thinking of something else than dancing and eating. These three years—have they really changed Kate so, and yet left her so nearly the same outwardly, except for a softened something in the frank, rosy face, and in the manner which is no longer in danger of being brusque or awkward? And Bessie—will she come, or send an excuse?

Kate has quite given them up; and Miss Alethea is glad that Doctor Kearney carries her off to dance. She is not sorry either, for her part, to have a moment of quiet observation from her sofa. Miss Alethea is not fond of Little Meddington parties, which, indeed, are apt to be failures; for how should they not be, when one fatigues one's self by dressing at an unusual hour to go out to meet people one can see any hour of the day one pleases? But here it is a different matter, and it need not be a *mauvais quart d'heure* spent in watching the prettily-dressed, animated groups.

"There are none prettier than our village girls," she is saying to herself, when there is a stir about the door-way, from a fresh arrival, and Bessie enters on Ambrose's arm. Just then the music ceases, and Kate turns, mindful of Miss Alethea, and comes this way, leaning on the doctor's arm. She starts a little when she sees Bessie, but stoops and kisses her—when will not women kiss?—and shakes hands with Ambrose, who looks as if he wished himself well out of the way.

Bessie is lovely in pale lilac. Her violet eyes are bright with excitement, though she is very cool when Doctor Kearney greets her frigidly. Miss Alethea wonders if she suspects she canceled her debt of gratitude to him when she married Ambrose.

Bessie has unwittingly taken her seat on the sofa beside Miss Alethea, and just then a servant brings Miss Alethea a cup of coffee. "I am glad your nerves are strong enough; I should be awake all night if I drank coffee," Bessie remarked, blandly.

"At my time of life one's nerves are used to shocks. Besides, I don't expect to sleep to-night," Miss Alethea answers, curtly.

Ambrose is watching, wishing to speak to her, but she avoids his eye and catches Kate's instead. Kate sees her old friend is annoyed, and as Delphine comes forward just then, Kate proposes to take Miss Alethea to the conservatory to see the roses.

"Thank you, dear; I'm not fond of roses after

night. Take the doctor instead, and he can tell me about them."

However, it is a good opportunity to change her seat, which Miss Alethea does by going into the adjoining room.

Ambrose had moved away when he saw Kate coming towards Miss Alethea, and he too is in the other room. He is with a group of men by a table, on which there is a bowl of punch, and he has just filled his glass.

"Ambrose"—it is Bessie's voice just at his elbow—"Mrs. Gardette wishes to speak to you."

"In a moment," he says.

"Hush, dear, she will hear you."

And Ambrose puts down his glass untasted, and goes to speak to Mrs. Gardette, who does not seem to be expecting him.

After that Bessie takes him into the other drawing-room, out of sight of the punch. Miss Alethea doubts very much if Kate could have managed so adroitly.

Kate is a long time in the conservatory—"You ought to see the roses. The Giant of Battles is superb," the doctor says to Miss Alethea.

"I have seen a giant, too; not so tall as Goliath of Gath; indeed, quite tiny, and with violet eyes; yet not one to be overcome by a strong man, much less a stripling."

Her doctor looked perplexed; he has only seen Bessie in her weakness.

"If you will win Kate," adds Miss Alethea; "I will leave you my blessing."

"I will do my best to get the legacy," he says, and goes to find Kate. He does not seem to think it prudent to let her be out of his sight. Miss Alethea predicts that Doctor Kearney will make another wonderful cure in our village. "But I shall always bear a grudge against our doctor," she is telling herself; "for it was by his means that we lost our saint."

Delphine's doctor, meanwhile, if he had been told he could have talked so much sober common sense amidst the laughter and music around him, would have been incredulous. He would not willingly have missed the few hours spent at Mrs. Burger's house, were it only for the opening he found for giving his special views upon hospital wards.

"Then you have no belief in the moral effect of the beautiful, Doctor Mackenzie. I thought it a necessary feature in a sick-room now-a-days. A bare room must have a depressing effect upon the patient," asserts Mrs. Elliot, smiling up at him as he stands above her, and with a deprecating gesture of the white hands which, another winter evening three years ago, had set Geoffrey Forbes wondering how far they had succeeded in moulding his gauche little country girl to their town-bred airs and graces. The airs and graces are, however, quite lost on Mahlon, who is saying, bluntly:

"Cleanliness is the first requisite; therefore, the less furniture the better."

"But bare cleanliness! If you only had Delphine's taste to help you. You must cultivate Delphine, Doctor Mackenzie. She will be of immense advantage to you; she is very liberal, indeed, lavish where she is interested; and her taste is perfect. It would be a sort of charity on your part to interest her in some such work."

"I cannot imagine Mrs. Burger in a hospital-ward," says Mahlon, a little coldly, glancing over where Delphine stands, the centre of a knot of gay young people.

"It is a little difficult, if one's imagination be not strongly developed. Yet, Delphine has her vagaries; and, better still, she holds her money in her hands—no one's advice even to ask. If there is a position to be envied in this troublous life, it is Delphine's."

Mrs. Elliot speaks with some feeling. She has known what it is in her own widowhood to be trammelled; and though it made little matter to her before Cyril's marriage, while she looked forward to the property's passing to Charlotte also as his wife, now it is different. Cyril is very good, of course, and Gertrude a prettily-behaved niece-in-law once removed, if the relation might be thus defined; properly mindful, Mrs. Elliot supposes, that but for her she would never have emerged from her chrysalis state into the butterfly glories of Mrs. Cyril Elliot. Notwithstanding all which, the elder Mrs. Elliot can perceive the superior advantages of Delphine Burger's position, free to do as she will with her own, without any reversion to some nephew-in-law. Husbands' kindred generally she holds to be a mistake; though, for that matter, so was Charlotte throwing herself away upon a man who is burying her in the country, just as if he had not a fair estate of his own, and Broomielaw to boot. A girl with all her advantages! and she might have had Cyril, who is turning out a man of mark.

It does not require long for a whole paragraph of thoughts to pass through one's mind, and these have flitted through Mrs. Elliot's in the brief space while she makes her last speech to Doctor Mackenzie, and he is returning:

"From my stand-point, I see a good many flaws in the position."

"And I can see none!"

"One thing you forget—that to arrive at this perfect state, there was a death to witness," says Mahlon, gravely.

Of course that was sad, but it was not a bitter trial to Delphine. Mr. Burger was a friend of her father's, and the match was made when she was very young. I don't mean you to understand that there was the shadow of an unhappiness between them; but it was only natural that Delphine should bear the old man's death tranquilly."

"And afterwards enjoy his money."

"Why not? It was what he expected, and no one could have managed everything better than old Mr. Burger; for he left the whole of his property to Delphine to do as she pleased with, without one irritating or insulting proviso."

"If you allude to a second marriage, I should have thought it so certain that common prudence would have made him provide against it. That is, if he did not wish another man to have his fortune," says Mahlon with a shrug.

Mrs. Elliot is a little nettled by the result of her involuntary match-making proclivity. Of course, the man does not know of Delphine's relationship to herself—but then, a woman so charming as Delphine! Nothing succeeds like success with Mrs. Elliot, and she is nettled by Doctor Mackenzie's indifference, and says, a little hotly:

"Mr. Burger knew Delphine was no fool."

"You said she was not in love with her husband," remarks Mahlon, not caring to discuss Mr. Burger's intellectual status.

"But I did not say she was ever in love with any one else. That is a fallacy of your sex, the need we women have of being in love. Empty-headed girls agree with you. But Delphine's head, if not wonderfully clever, is well-filled after her own fashion."

"After rather a frivolous fashion," Mahlon is about to say, but Delphine's approach checks him.

He is surprised to find that many of the guests have left, that actually he is among the last, and he had only intended to spend a half hour at the most.

Delphine is saying:

"There is a friend of ours, I would like to make known to you, Doctor Mackenzie—Doctor Kearney, whose paper in one of the medical reviews I heard you bring forward to Mr. Gardette a little while ago, in corroboration of some of your own views; so you might like to compare notes farther. If you will take me into the other room—"

She puts her pretty little gloved hand in his arm; and somehow, as he looks down upon her, he feels himself less strict a censor than when he was watching her in the gay group apart. That is, if there could be space in this hard, work-a-day world for things merely ornamental, one might acknowledge the right in it of anything so dainty. It is by no means unqualified praise, this, in Mahlon Mackenzie's view of the world, for he is far from being sure that there is any such space.

On their way into the other room, they pass a fair woman in lilac silk, of whose story Delphine makes a sketch, by way of interesting Doctor Mackenzie farther in Kate's doctor. It does interest him more than she supposes; his thoughts have gone straight from this luxurious apartment, to Miss Ellis's narrow garret, and the invalid

girl there. And when the two doctors leave Delphine Burger's door together, it is with the arrangement to meet at Miss Ellis's on the morrow.

But when the morrow arrived, as their fates would have it, Miss Ellis was out when the doctors came, and made their examination of the patient; with this only result, that Miss Ellis at Dr. Mackenzie's next visit had two opinions instead of one, as to the utter hopelessness of the disease from the beginning, and the impossibility of doing more for it than she had done.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Happy is the wooing that is not long in doing."

After that evening, Mahlon was one of Delphine's most constant Thursday evening guests; she was proud of the fact, for he went nowhere else, and this grave, quiet doctor had been a little difficult to attract. Not that she did altogether attract him; indeed, she sometimes repelled him, this gay, worldly little woman, so utterly unlike his ideal of what Adam's helpmate should be. But there was one strong bond between them—the hospital—the finishing of which had fallen almost entirely upon Mahlon, the building fund having been spent, and no one feeling an especial interest in the completion. Delphine gave liberally to the hospital, and was always ready to do something for his poor patients; so that Mahlon was constantly at her house—running headlong into danger, every one predicted; but if so, he was unconscious of it. For Delphine, no one was in the least anxious. A grave, quiet, literal man like Doctor Mackenzie, was not of the kind to entrap a gay, bright, imaginative person like Delphine. Besides, she always laughed at the idea of his being attentive to her, and declared that a woman must be ill unto death, for Doctor Mackenzie to feel interested in her.

It was a chance word or two which Mahlon overheard, that revealed to him that people were coupling his name with Delphine's. Most men, less fastidious than he, would have said it was nonsense, and would have thought no more about it. But he considered it a wrong to a woman to have her name so mentioned, if he did not intend if possible to marry her. Therefore it was plainly his duty to silence the gossips by avoiding Delphine. He was sorry, for he found her house pleasant. It never occurred to him that perhaps Delphine might be sorry too; no doubt, if he had thought so, he would have acted just the same; for even trifles wore the serious aspect of right or wrong, and were to be acted on accordingly, to Mahlon's thinking.

So he would make his good-bye to-night a final one, and go away without any explanation. It is

late, and every one is leaving. "Wait a few moments," Delphine says. "I have something to tell you for the good of your hospital."

He cannot refuse, for there are too many bystanders; besides, it does not so much matter, since this is to be their last interview. Delphine bids her guests good-night gayly. She has no idea that there is a solemn leave-taking to go through.

"Shall I tease you with guessing, or tell you at once?" she asks, when she stands alone with Mahlon in her empty drawing-room. He looks too grave to tease, so she adds: "Old Mr. Gale has promised me a thousand for his subscription. You see I did my best to be charming, and he considered my endeavor to be worth just so much money."

If she had intended to please him, Delphine must have been chilled and disappointed by his manner of receiving her tidings. She cannot tell that he regrets this bit of begging for his hobby, as but another way for people to connect their names. Delphine is so heedless.

"I am sorry," says Mahlon, at last. "I wish you had not asked Mr. Gale."

Delphine opens her blue eyes wide with astonishment. "Do you really mean it?"

"Certainly, I mean it."

"Oh, very well. But I did not know you disliked to be helped so much as all that."

"It is not that I dislike to be helped—" answered Mahlon, growing confused.

"Only you dislike my doing it."

"For your own sake. I never could speak half-truths—may I be frank?"

"Certainly," says Delphine, wondering what this whole truth would be.

"You know I am very ignorant of your society, of its actions and its judgments. I have found it pleasant here, and I never thought of doing you a wrong."

Delphine looks bewildered for a moment, and then the blood comes in a hot flush into her face. "Will you please explain what wrong you could possibly do me?"

"It is certainly a wrong to allow any one to suppose I do not consider you in some measure sacred, set apart, as it were from other women—"

"I understand," she interrupts, the color dying out of her face. "You mean as Mr. Burger's widow."

"Yes; and I blame myself for carelessly letting our friendship be misunderstood. I can only promise not to intrude again."

"But you don't mean it," exclaims Delphine, eagerly. "If people are silly, it is nothing to us"

"Pardon me, but it is a great deal to you," he says, gravely.

"Not as much as you think. I don't care in the least," says Delphine, with a little shrug of indifference.

"But you should care—at least I should care for you."

"Bah! I can judge for myself. I know, as you say, more of the ways of society than you do, and I do not wish to lose a friend so easily."

"I am sorry you think me wrong," answers Mahlon; "but when you are older you will agree with me."

"When I am eighty, I shall doubtless not care for friends nor anything else."

Mahlon looks at her, decidedly puzzled. He cannot understand her irritability.

"Of course the loss is all on my side," he says.

"Of course, or I would not have argued the expediency of your decision. Very well; but if we cannot be friends, we can at least be on friendly terms, and your patients need not suffer. A mere hint will suffice," coldly adds Delphine.

"Thank you," he says; "in the name of my sick. You will not refuse to shake hands with me?"

"Why should I? It is a mere form."

Yet she does not refuse when Mahlon holds his out to her; and for a moment, as her hand lies so passively in his grasp, he has an odd feeling that he might hold it or drop it as he pleased. He blushes a little at the conceit, and lets Delphine go.

"Good-night," he says.

"Good-bye." And Delphine turns away, busying herself in rearranging some flowers in a vase on the mantel.

Not until Mahlon has fairly shut himself out into the hall, does he remember that he has left his hat in the drawing-room. He is inclined to go home without it, and let any chance passer-by think what they will of him. It is very hard to have these small absurdities thrust on us when we are acting the heroics. There is scarcely anything Mahlon would not do, rather than open that door; but there is no help for him, so at last he turns the lock as softly as possible.

To his great relief, Delphine is no longer standing before the mantel; she has gone.

Finding the room empty, Mahlon advances softly to the table. There he stops; for he sees a suspicious heap of silk and lace upon the sofa. If it is Delphine, she has her face so buried in the cushions, that there is no seeing it.

Mahlon's first thought is that she is tired, and is resting; but a convulsive little sob which goes shivering through her frame convinces him that it is not rest, though it may be relief which Delphine is seeking.

Tears are serious things to Mahlon. He comes of Scottish blood, and the women in his family are self-contained and reserved, and seldom give way to tears, even under pressure. He does not understand Delphine's temperament, nor conjecture that a dismal fit of crying might come

from a trivial disappointment. He might have recovered his hat, and withdrawn without Delphine's knowledge; but so used is he to stop and prescribe, that he never thinks of going. He stands there quietly looking at her, waiting for the paroxysm to pass. He is not a fool—indeed, is considered very clever—yet in some things he is wonderfully dull. As he stands waiting, it never occurs to him to connect her tears with that slight act of his of shutting the door. He has wit enough to suppose their interview had something to do with Delphine's outburst of grief; but he sets it down to wounded delicacy, anger, or even a tribute of remorse to the memory of Mr. Burger. A little valerian or bromide—

Just then she sits up, pushing back from her flushed face the wavy hair which had escaped its confinement; she looks up, and sees him watching her with an expression of concern in his eyes.

Delphine's first thought is that she is dreaming, and one is never on one's guard in sleep. Then she is conscious that Mahlon's eyes drop under her gaze, and she wonders if he has seen a ghost in hers, he grows so very pale.

"I thought you had gone," she says, sharply. "Surely, with your ideas of strict propriety, you need not be reminded how late it is."

He does not answer her at once, and she resumes:

"It was so very tiresome to-night, and a good cry is such a relief. Just what a cigar is to you men at times."

Still there comes no answer.

"Is anything wrong? Any one ill, I mean," asks Delphine, growing half frightened and bewildered.

"Yes there is something wrong," says Mahlon, slowly. "I made a mistake when I said it was best for us to part. My love will be a better protection—"

Delphine holds up her hand to check him. "Not to-night. To-morrow, if you choose then."

As Mahlon walks home, he is conscious of the same odd tingling through his veins, which set his heart beating so strangely when Delphine in her bewilderment looked up at him. For the first time in his life he has acted from impulse, and the sensation is pleasurable.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

[Written expressly for Godey's Lady's Book.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ.

Authors of "Ingremsco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin
Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Oh aching time! O moments big as years!"

The next day, Mahlon saw rather ruefully that there were some drawbacks to his life as he had depicted it during that walk home from Delphine's door. Had he gained more headway in his profession, it would have been different; but now he felt that his poor little sign would only be a virtual declaration that he did not care to be dependent upon his wife, or rather on Mr. Burger's fortune. He had his fears, too, whether Delphine would make the sort of wife he had always looked forward to owning—something no doubt impossible to find, yet he had a belief that such were to be had for the seeking. Perhaps he had seen just such women a few times in a sick-room, and thought they spent their life in that awed, hushed state in which they went through their duties there. Delphine's ways were very different; but it was too late to remember that, save in as far as he could improve them.

What he had to do, was to ask Delphine to be his wife. He wished she had let him speak the night before, when it would have been easier. It seemed more of a business transaction now. But perhaps when it came to the point, Delphine helped him out a little—for she was a quick-witted little woman, and disliked an awkward position—or it may have been that she expected serious, odd ways in this lover of hers, and was not disappointed.

As for Delphine, love had come to her after more experience of life than to many women, and she was therefore the more inclined to give herself up to the feeling. To her, just then, to love was better than to be loved. Every one said Dr. Mackenzie's influence over her was unbounded. She gave up cards and dancing, because he disliked them; and would have dispensed with her Thursday evening receptions if he had asked her, though she might have yawned through those hours he considered wasted. She always tucked away her novel under the sofa-pillow when he came, to escape a lecture on solid reading.

"Your home must have been very nice," she says, once, when Mahlon has been descanting on

the days of his youth. "But what did you do on a rainy day or a winter evening? When I was a girl, we used to wheel back the chairs and tables to the wall, and dance; or we would have a round game of cards, or even a romp. For I was one of six girls," she adds, apologetically; "and we were poor before I married, and not intellectual; though we managed to make as much out of the shreds of life, as some do out of a whole pattern."

Delphine says this, as the two are walking together one sunny, spring morning, some weeks after their engagement. There is nothing in the gayly thronged streets, in the sunshine, and the glad and bustling stir of all living things in it, to suggest clouds and darkness, unless it were a flitting shade upon the April face beside him, which reminds him, almost with a start of surprise, that this blithe little creature is indeed the same woman whose wet eyes had gazed up at him out of a troubled dream, that night when he first knew that she belonged to him. Of what is she dreaming now? for there is a tender, troubled wistfulness in her eyes again.

"I wish we had met in that long-ago time, Mahlon; I wish you knew my sisters—Kate is the only one you have ever seen. But our old life you never can know—that is all over. Everything is changed at home, and will be changed still more, now that Dr. Kearney is to take Kate out of it. It is not only papa's state of health but Elliot—"

"Elliot?" he repeats, in some surprise. "Is there a brother, then?"

He has not stopped to count over the six girls of whom Delphine spoke, when she takes up the name tenderly:

"Elliot, my twin sister, Elliot. Mahlon, I have been trying to tell you—I long to know what you will think."

They have by this time passed into a quiet, suburban street, and she slips her hand into his arm, and watching his face wistfully, tells him the story of Elliot's disappearance.

"They managed to keep it from me, all the time I was abroad," she adds. "Elliot begged this in her farewell note, and Margaret would not have her wish crossed. I wonder now how I was so blind as to suspect nothing, from just the meager mention, at long intervals, that she was well. Yet what could I suspect? Elliot was always a strange, dreamy child—I hardly expected her to be anything of a correspondent. When I came home, I found that she had written to Margaret every six months—she had been gone two years, it is three now—and her letters, though they told nothing but that she was well, had the one clue of the Baltimore postmark. It was that which decided me upon settling in the house which belonged to me here—the hope that one day I might meet the child face to face in the

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street. I have tried to find her by every means which money could give, and have failed."

She ends, looking up to him for encouragement in her hope. She does not find it; only a grave disapproval—is it of her course or Elliot's?

She does not quite know which, when he says something about his surprise at hearing that so sad a burden rests upon her thoughts—how then can she be so light-hearted? he is asking himself—when she says, glowing and brightening all at once, with one of her sudden smiles:

"Oh, just think what it will be! If I should see a figure strolling on before me, perhaps—a little taller it may be, for she was only seventeen when we parted, and she is nearly twenty-one now—but I shall know the figure at once, and I shall run after it, and lay my hand upon her arm, and she will turn—O, Elliot!"

There is such a thrill of intense joy in her voice, such a shining light of hope in her face, that Mahlon has not the heart to utter a word to cloud it, vain as he believes that hope to be. He does not ask himself again "How can she be so light-hearted?" and he comes nearer to understanding her sunny nature than he ever has before, or perhaps will easily again.

They have walked by this time almost to where the straggling street loses itself in the ragged-looking open lots that fringe the borders of the city. Yonder, in the most ragged-looking space of all, stands Mahlon's hospital, where he has brought Delphine to judge of the effect of one of her decorative designs. This hospital has been Mahlon's great hope for Delphine—perhaps it is because it is their one interest in common. True, it is only for the outside decorations of the building that she cares; but if permitted to beautify that, she may find something to interest her within.

To-day Mahlon has chosen the hour for coming while the workmen have dispersed for dinner, so that the two just now are quite alone. There is an air of desolation, at which Delphine shudders, about the huge, unfinished granite structure, with its skeleton scaffolding, and the barren ground around covered with uncut stone. Delphine mounts one of these blocks, her dress sweeping over the rough mass as she shades her eyes with her dainty parasol, and criticises the skill of the stone-cutters. Mahlon, standing near and listening, is struck by the contrast she makes—this dot of bright color—with the sombre gray building. And of both he is to be master. In the hospital, he will carry hope or despair to many a poor soul, the verdict of life or death. But this little woman at his side, will he fail to influence?

Delphine is flushed and radiant. Though the scaffolding ribs the front of the building, and spoils the effect of the cornices over the windows, yet enough can be seen to delight her with her

success. It is a triumph on her part, this embellishing of Mahlon's hobby, and she is full of fresh designs.

Mahlon still listens silently, only half approvingly. Suddenly he leaves her side.

"I do not like the appearance of the scaffolding," he says. "It is horrible how careless men are of their lives."

"You do not want the first man killed *outside* of your hospital," laughed Delphine.

She sees the slight frown gathering, the disapproval in his face, which one of her flippant speeches always brings there; but she has not time to notice it.

"Surely, Mahlon, you are not going up that ladder," she cries.

"Why not? The scaffolding is meant to bear five men, besides the weight of the cornice; so it will bear me—" he calls back.

"But if it should not? For my sake, Mahlon, be careful."

"There is not the slightest danger," he says, almost coldly. "I am not one to run foolish risks."

Delphine stands watching him silently, even admiringly, notwithstanding her terror, as a woman will admire strength and agility in a man—for to ascend the light, swaying ladder, is a feat in her inexperienced eyes. She breathes more freely when he reaches the scaffolding—to mount the ladder, has been to her the real danger.

"Ah, how high you are above me!" she calls out, half sorrowfully, half laughingly. "Can I ever hope to reach you?" And she holds up her hands in supplication.

Mahlon pauses for a moment, looking down on her—on the smiling, upturned face, the pretty gesture of humility. Then he turns away to inspect the scaffolding.

A few seconds later, before Delphine has moved, he is conscious of a low, cracking sound, and then he is falling—falling so slowly, he thinks, because he has time to compute the number of feet he has to fall; to recall how closely strewn are the blocks of stone; to remember Delphine's laughing face, upturned as she stood calling to him.

By one of those marvelous escapes which lead one to put faith in the doctrine of guardian angels, Mahlon does not fall on the granite, but on mother earth. She, however, by no means treats this son of hers as she is fabled to have treated Auteus. Indeed, she takes all strength from him, even the power of speech, though he is perfectly conscious, and sees Delphine's white face bending over him. Delphine's, earnest and quiet enough now. Perhaps that same white face, with the awed look in it, had bent over old Mr. Burger's death-bed. Even this thought comes dreamily and painlessly.

Mahlon hears Delphine cry out to some of the

returning workmen. Her voice has no terror in it, but sounds to him low and mournful, unlike the gay voice calling up to him a minute or two ago. Mahlon has a sense of disappointment; for if he has made a woman of this little Delphine, why is he to die? Mr. Burger has made her a rich, and he an earnest woman—yet some one else would only love her the better for both their labor.

Just then, some one begins to lift him, and an unconsciousness black as the grave comes over him.

How long he had been in that unconsciousness which is neither life nor death, Mahlon could not tell. His impression is that he has merely closed his eyes and opened them—yet now he is in bed in a strange room, though his last recollection was of the hard ground and the blue sky above. And here is Delphine bending over him—the same white, earnest face. Yet she no longer wears the gay colors that brightened in the sunshine, but a soft gray on which his eyes like to rest.

"Has the doctor come?" he asks.

"Not yet," she answers. "He is not to come for an hour."

He seems to be a little while pondering Delphine's information, and then asks:

"Where am I?"

"At my house, Mahlon." There is something beseeching in her eyes, as she adds: "I could not have nursed you so well anywhere else."

"How long?" he asks.

"Ten days. You have been very ill, Mahlon."

"And you have nursed me. It is odd to lose ten days out of one's life," he adds, half dreamily.

"They have not been lost to me," returned Delphine, gently.

"They were long to you, I fear. But I shall get well now—you need not shut yourself up much longer."

Is this her reward? Her face may have asked the question, for he stretches out his hand, feebly enough; and Delphine, laying hers in the open palm, bends her head and rests it lightly there. There is a quiet movement in the shadow of the window-curtains, and a little old lady who has been standing unobserved and forgotten there, crosses the floor softly, and so out of the room.

"It was a wonderful escape," Mahlon says, presently. "If the scaffold had fallen with the workmen, some of them must have been killed. Would you have been very sorry to lose me, dear?"

"Very sorry," she says, quietly, and he feels truly—and yet he misses the little rapture of words which she wasted on many a trifle in by-gone days.

Meantime, Miss Alethea—for she it was, who

had come on to help Delphine in her task of nursing—had gone down-stairs, and in passing through the lower hall was attracted by a voice at the door, enquiring for Dr. Mackenzie. She went forward and found a poorly-clad, shrewd-looking boy, who said he had been sent by Miss Ellis, who lived in the same lodging-house, to find Dr. Mackenzie, and to tell him that he must please come to her as soon as he could, for the girl Gretel she was nursing, was dying, she was afraid. And here, in confirmation of his message, he held out a folded note, addressed to Dr. Mackenzie at his office, where the boy said he had been, and had been told that Dr. Mackenzie was here.

Miss Alethea took the note, and was putting on her glasses to decipher it, or at least its superscription, when she bethought herself, and gave it back.

"It would be useless to leave it; he could not attend to it for many a long day. They told you at the office that Dr. Mackenzie was here; but they did not tell you he is very ill himself? I thought not. So your best plan is to go straight back to the office and ask for Dr. Heston, his partner—or the office-boy will direct you to some other physician if Dr. Heston is out. You will lose no time, there's a good lad—and take this for your pains—" putting a coin into his hand. "And be sure you tell the young woman how it is Dr. Mackenzie does not come. If I could myself—"

But of course she cannot—poor little Delphine will need her, for the nursing is by no means over, although convalescence has begun. And so Miss Alethea presently goes up-stairs again, in cheerful ignorance of how very near she has been to finding Elliot by means of the clue she so quietly gave back out of her hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Now, this extremity
Hath brought me to thy hearth."

Mahlon's recovery was slow, and it was decided that he should go away, and try what a long rest and change of scene would do for him. He would fain have proposed to Delphine that they should marry and she go with him; but he saw that she, too, needed rest, which she would not take in his sick-room; and he had to content himself with her promise that the marriage should be on the day following his return.

But the change was not of the anticipated benefit. Mahlon missed Delphine, and thought much more of his return to her than of growing strong. Her face haunted him—that pale face, which had lost not a little of its beauty from anxiety and watching, but which had gained a hundred-fold in Mahlon's eyes. He was restless

and uneasy until the day was fixed which would recall him to her.

He was not yet strong, and had still much of the fastidiousness of a convalescent, so that it was a little trial to him to alight at the late Mr. Burger's house, with the feeling that next day he would be master there. But one thought comforted him: the Delphine he was going to meet was totally unlike the girl Mr. Burger had married, or even the woman who had bought his first visit with a few bottles of wine. As totally unlike as were his feelings the night he stood on the hearth-rug and watched her weeping, to the almost feverish impatience with which he stood in the same place and listened for her foot-fall. Would she never come? Then there was an ominous rustle of silk, a gay flutter of ribands, and Delphine, the gay, saucy, brilliant Delphine of old, stood before him, her whole face radiant with happiness; for had he not come back to her as from the grave itself?

Ah well, if the leopard cannot change his spots, neither can a woman her nature; and Mahlon had to take his wife as God made her, not as he would unmake her.

There was no doubt of Delphine's generosity. As soon as she was married, she insisted upon dismissing her business-agent, and giving the whole management of her property into Mahlon's hands. Mahlon accepted the trust unwillingly enough, but as part of his duty as Delphine's husband. But he took very little trouble about it; so that the income was placed in bank for Delphine's use, he thought no more of it than he could possibly avoid. He would not touch a dollar for his own uses; and as to managing old Mr. Burger's money, it would have been like watching a nightmare.

Delphine and Mahlon drifted farther apart after their marriage—drifted farther apart, because Mahlon had learned to love the woman who had nursed him, and he was jealous of the old Delphine who had robbed him of her, and whom he had given up now in despair of ever improving.

And Delphine could not take up again the life she had led during those terrible, anxious days, when she was uncertain whether Mahlon would live. She had no desire to take it up. In the sunshine, passed away the shadow; and perhaps the sun was even more brilliant, because of the cloudy days gone by.

Mahlon's profession engrossed him. The hospital was organized, and his patients had increased instead of falling off as he had feared. One patient, however, he had lost—the girl whom Miss Ellis had nursed, and who, he learned on calling at the lodging-house, had died during his illness, Miss Ellis removing immediately out of his ken—so that the whole episode connected with her became as a parenthesis in his life. Mahlon thought that since it was his profession which absorbed

him, Delphine could not complain—if he had sought his pleasures away from her, she might find fault. Besides, he never interfered with her mode of life, which could be as before her marriage, only her grave husband was too busy to take part in her amusements. Occasionally a slight consciousness did come to him that Delphine had some claim upon his time—when he would manage to spend an evening with her, and Delphine would do her best to hide her surprise and fall into his mood; and if he did not thrust all his own worries and anxieties into some corner closet which reticent natures are apt to find conveniently near, it was no fault of hers.

"I wonder if he makes much money, and what he does with it?" she would say to herself. "Perhaps he spends it all on his beloved hospital. If he would only buy me a riband—no, not a riband, that he would not do—a bit of sackcloth, I would wear it for his sake. I would willingly be ill, just to see if I would be as much worth his trouble as his pauper patients."

Poor little Delphine, she laughed, but she could have cried far more easily.

One day there came startling news to Mahlon. Go where he would, he heard of but little else than failures, railroad disasters, money panics. The papers had no other news. It was not difficult, indeed, it was but a half hour's labor, to find that Delphine's money had gone, vanished like a ghost, leaving no sign. It was only surprising that Mahlon was surprised that such was the fate of stocks not looked after. But he was annoyed, astounded; and, stranger still, he regretted this money, which he had not thought it worth while to take care of. He regretted it, because of his carelessness, for he might have saved part, at least; and then, what would Delphine feel? This poor little woman who had so enjoyed wealth, what would she do without it? Could he leave her pretty home and its surroundings, and be content on the moderate income which was all that he for many a year must expect to make? How would she take this loss? Of course she would blame him—that she had a right to do. But would it have a permanent effect, and leave her discontented and fretful? It is difficult to think of Delphine as either; but heretofore she has always had her own way, so Mahlon says, and no doubt believes.

Delphine has to be told of her loss, and Mahlon knows he must break it to her. But he, who has often nerved himself to speak the saddest of all tidings, breaks down utterly when he has only to tell of a mere worldly loss, upon which he himself would have laid little stress. Twice or thrice he has tried to speak, but Delphine's bright face checked him. He remembers the change that came over it once; and whatever he may have felt before, Mahlon now wishes to keep her just as she is. He does not care to play the ne-

romancer, and by a few words, to him almost meaningless, to transform this gay, brilliant little Delphine into something very different—his pretty Cinderella, decked out for the King's ball, to shrink away in her tatters to her ash-heap.

To-day he has been lingering most unnecessarily over the sick beds of two or three of his patients: at least, he has done nothing to cheer them, if that was his object; for he has been silent and abstracted. He is still early when he reaches home. He stops an instant in the hall, to discover whether Delphine has any guests; and even looks into the empty drawing-rooms, before he goes to her own especial morning room. The blaze of light there almost blinds Mahlon; and then he catches sight of Delphine sitting alone, and his heart smites him, and he quite forgives her the novel she is reading, though he may wish she had not so quickly put it out of sight.

"Is it you, Mahlon? Is it late, or are you earlier than usual?"

"It is early. I was half afraid you were out, when I found the parlors empty; and I wished especially to see you."

"Did you want to speak to me?" asks Delphine, brightening. "But you look dreadfully tired, Mahlon. Let me ring for some coffee."

She rises and rings the bell, standing beside him, by the fire, as she waits to give her order to the servant. They are strangely silent, these two: Mahlon thinking how he may best break his tidings to her; Delphine knowing there is something wrong, and wondering if he means to tell her. Any confidence has become a pleasure to Delphine; anything hinting to her that she has some part in his life, in his thoughts.

Silently they stand almost side by side, until the servant has returned with the coffee. Then Delphine motions him to leave, and goes herself and pours out the cup which she brings to Mahlon. But he does not offer to take it from her.

"Have you read the papers for the last week, Delphine?" he asks, abruptly.

"I? No, I seldom do," she answers, with a little blush, as for a fault. "Is there anything particular in them?"

"Has no one told you of the failure of Brewster?"

"Brewster!" Delphine gives a start, though not enough to endanger the cup in her hand. "Have you lost anything by him, Mahlon?"

"You have, Delphine, and very heavily."

He had not intended to be so abrupt; indeed, had proposed to himself to tell her very guardedly, not to shock her. But he has lost his self-control, and his hand trembles so that he cannot even reach out to take the cup of coffee from her.

"But there is something still left of other stocks?" she asked, anxiously.

"Not a dollar, Delphine; everything has gone. I have been unpardonably careless."

He cannot look at her as he speaks, and for a moment there is silence.

"Do you mind it so very much, Mahlon?" she asks, presently.

"I? Of course I do. I have been so much to blame. The very trust you put in me should have made me doubly careful."

"But you do not mind the money? That is what I mean."

"I mind it for you, my poor child."

"Only for me?"

"How could I for myself? I never have touched a dollar of it," Mahlon says, hastily, and then regrets his words.

"I know." And then she adds: "Will it be very hard on you to have to take care of me?"

"Hard on me, Delphine? I don't think you have been quite my wife, just because I have not taken care of you. I think I am a little glad to have you forced upon me. The whole blow falls on you, poor child. You have so long been used to all that money can buy, that it will be hard for you to be a poor man's wife."

Delphine has turned to put the coffee-cup on the mantel. He sees a little shiver run through her as he speaks, a shudder at the mere thought of poverty. It is so natural she should feel so, that he cannot even be hurt, only sorry for this poor little Delphine who has so long reveled in prosperity. So he is startled to see the gay, saucy face she turns on him.

"And I will have to come to you for everything; and you will scold if the butcher's bill is too large; and will prohibit sweetmeats as too expensive, just as papa used when his six daughters kept house for him by turns. But you cannot get rid of me as papa did, by advising me to marry a rich man. After all, Mahlon, I am most sorry for the hospital, of which I confess to having often been jealous."

"Why?" asks Mahlon, absently. He is looking at her with an absorbed expression in his eyes, as if they suddenly beheld a blessed revelation. Delphine — this is Delphine; and he has not known her all this while!

"Why not?" she is replying. "Has not the hospital taken from me all your leisure? And did it not nearly cause your death?" asks Delphine, softly.

Mahlon thinks of the pale face bent over him that day—the face he has long mourned for as lost. He is not sorry to miss it now; to learn that Delphine could have a greater shock than the loss of her fortune. Hereafter he could never find fault with the woman who takes all troubles lightly, so that he is spared to her; and who is inclined to bask in the sunshine, rather than to mope in the shadow. It is worth all of old Mr. Burger's money, such a discovery; and Mahlon

tells her so. And Delphine always declares she lost nothing in the great failure of 18—.

And something more she gained. It was on this wise :

The day on which the inevitable move is to take place, out of the great Burger mansion, to Dr. Mackenzie's little house around the corner, Delphine is sitting over the fire in her dismantled morning-room, waiting for Mahlon to come for her when the last load of furniture should be gone. The place is desolate enough, with the firelight making strange gleams and shades about the empty, uncurtained, rain-swept windows, the bare floor, the walls where all the pictures are displaced, and only Delphine's shadow "glowers about," a huge, misshapen, hunchback sort of thing, very different from the pretty little figure leant forward in the low chair, with hands clasped on her knee, and eyes gazing with a bright, half-smiling and half-dreaming look, into the very heart of the cheerful blaze.

The dream is not broken by the light tap that comes to the door. Perhaps it is so light that she does not hear it. And then, the door opens.

In the well-ordered Burger house, doors know better than to creak ; and this one swings back quite noiselessly. But somehow, after one more dreamy moment—perhaps it is at some slight stir, some rustle on the threshold—Delphine turns.

She turns, and stares in a bewildered, breathless sort of way ; then, with a low, glad cry, starts to her feet.

"Elliot—Elliot!"

The slim, dark figure in the long, dripping waterproof cloak, comes in slowly, hesitatingly ; is met more than half-way, and caught in the embrace of the bright-eyed, eager little woman, a very April sunshine of smiles and tears.

"Elliot!" when she had recovered her breath, putting her hands against Elliot's sobbing breast, holding herself off from her thus a little between her kisses, looking up at her half chidingly—"Elliot! How could you treat us so?"

But Elliot's flushed cheek pales.

"You will not ask me, Delphine. You will let the past rest. I can not speak of it."

"But surely, Nell, you are a little unreasonable—"

Elliot's gesture is so full of pain, that Delphine stops short. She adds, however, after an instant's pause :

"You must let me say this much about the past, dear Elliot—that if you have been fancying you had anything to do with that attack of poor papa's, the doctors know that is all a mistake. The stroke was inevitable ; it had been coming upon him for some time. If it is that which has been keeping you away from us all, all these four years, poor child—"

But Elliot does not answer that. Indeed, she could have answered nothing. She has caught

Delphine's arm, gazing searchingly into her eyes for the truth of the assertion. Innocent of that—of that, at least?

She sees that Delphine speaks the truth. She heaves the deep, slow sigh of a death-heavy burthen lifted ; then, after a pause, says timidly :

"And how is he? I know he is not—dead. I have been watching, and you have never put on mourning for him."

"He is always the same, Nell. There is no change to look for—until the last great one," the answer comes in a low voice of awe.

Delphine has drawn the girl forward to her own chair, and pushes her gently down into it, kneeling beside her, and unfastening the wet cloak, letting it fall back, and taking off the cheap little brown hat, which she tosses aside in a sort of scornful impatience. Delphine will never lose her love for pretty, tasteful things. Elliot has reached out for the hat, but Delphine only catches her hands, and laughs at her, with tears in her voice, however, and in the bright eyes taking their fill of gazing at her.

"Never mind the ugly thing. You always would be a dowdy, Nell, without me to look after you. Do you remember the dear old days when I used to trim your hats for you?"

At that, as if there were a pathos in the memory of those old hats, the two sisters clasp each other again, and laugh, and cry ; until Delphine, brushing away the tears, says in that gay little quivering voice of hers :

"We shall have just such works of art again, I promise you. For what do you think, Nell ; we are just moving, Mahlon and I, out of this grand establishment, to the cosiest little box in the next street. I have lost every dollar of poor Mr. Burger's fortune—"

Her arms close about Elliot ; she feels the shiver that goes through the girl, at those last words. But how should she understand? She says, deprecatingly :

"Yes, we shan't be at all well off, I suppose. Now, if you had only come before, when I could have given you so much to enjoy ! But still, Nell, we can make merry without the fatted calf."

It is not at this comparison of herself to the Prodigal, that Elliot's color brightens in such a burning flush. She breaks in, hastily :

"No, if you still had that man's money, I could never have come to you"—and there stops short.

Delphine, looks at her, puzzled.

"Nell, could that have had anything to do with your going away from home?—that you disliked that marriage so? I knew you did not like it, but"—coloring a little—"if he bought me in my childish ignorance of what I was doing, he used his purchase well, and kindly, and generously. Mr. Burger was a good man, Elliot."

"Good!" The girl can not help that half-ut-

tered sound, a mere gasp rather than a word. But Delphine catches it. She throws back her head with a proud little movement, and repeats it.

"Good—yes, good, Elliot. What have you to say against it?"

Elliot glances round her in a frightened way, and puts out her hand, catching at her wet cloak as if she would draw it round her, and begone. But Delphine understands the gesture, and lays her hand gently but authoritatively upon Elliot's shoulder. Gay little Delphine always had a strange control over the more earnest sister; and she has it still.

"Dear Elliot, if you knew! Yes, you shall know. I will tell you what I have never told to any one, what Mr. Burger never told to any one, save me." Then you will understand why I say he was a good man.

"It was long ago, in his old home, Elliot—he had a nephew, a brother's only son, who had been left from a child to his care, and whom he brought up as if he were his own son indeed. And it hurt him as if it had been his own son, when the young man went wrong. For he did go terribly wrong. He forged his uncle's signature two or three times on the bank with which Mr. Burger was connected, for sums which it ruined Mr. Burger to pay. But he did pay them, and managed so that not a breath of suspicion tainted the guilty one, and when he disappeared, as he did just then—"

Elliot is looking at her in a strange, breathless manner. She breaks in, just there:

"Friedrich! Is the nephew, too, named Friedrich Burger? And was he married?"

"He *was* named so; he is dead. He died just after we went abroad. Mr. Burger had always been trying to trace him, and found him at last ending his life in a Paris garret. There was a letter or two discovered, which led Mr. Burger to think he might have married; but nothing more could ever be learned. I am afraid he died as he had lived," she adds, sadly, a shade crossing her bright face at the remembrance; "for Mr. Burger came back to me at the hotel, broken down with the grief, and it was then he told me all this story. He had made his sacrifice for nothing, the good old man; he had come over to this country, and begun the struggle of life all over again, past middle age; and it had not availed. I suppose that is often the way with sacrifices."

Elliot does not answer; and when Delphine turns round from gazing retrospectively into the firelight, she sees that the girl is shivering and trembling from head to foot, her head bowed down upon her hands.

"Elliot, my dear!"

And then the girl lifts up her face, and catches her sister's two hands fast in hers, and pours out

the whole story of her guilty self-sacrifice, which too, like the righteous one, has not availed.

It takes longer in the telling than old Mr. Burger's, for Delphine will have an account of all the ups and downs, and they were many, of Elliot's hidden life. And she must tell of her two stolen night journeys to Little Medlington, when she had grown desperate for news of home, before Delphine's return to Baltimore; after which, Elliot had taken to keeping up a watch upon her house, discovered through the directory, and thus knew all was well with her loved ones at home. She had had a glimpse of Kate, too, with Dr. Kearney, through the windows of the conservatory one night, and—yes, she had not been surprised when she saw their marriage in the papers. She had seen Ambrose's first. And Charlotte, is she always buried in that country place, poor Charlotte! except so very seldom when she comes up to visit Delphine? And does Delphine think she is happy with that stern-looking Mr. Forbes, whom Elliot has seen once or twice at Delphine's? Indeed, Delphine is surprised to discover how much Elliot has seen, until she learns that the girl's sole happiness has lain in evening loiterings past her windows when the gas was lighted within, and the lace curtains only half drawn, as the cheery manner is in B——.

Just then comes a quick, light step outside the door, which Delphine, even in her pre-occupation, hears.

Mahlon is duly astonished to find his poor little lost friend, Miss Ellis, seated before his fireside, his wife upon her knees beside her, leaning on her lap, Delphine's fair face all sunshine, as he had not seen it in those brightest days when she was a rich, envied woman, and had not lost—

Lost! What has she not gained? Her blue eyes answer for her as she puts Elliot's hand in Mahlon's.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Margaret has nearly let the book slide from her knee, with the shiver that goes through her; she puts out her hand hurriedly to arrest the fall, but she thrusts the volume from her, on the window-sill, as if something in it jarred on her. It is like the thought of chilly blasts creeping in at undefended doorways, while the balmy spring breathes about her. And it is spring—spring in every sense; and to-night Roger is coming home.

After eight years.

But how the moments drag out now—those years hardly seemed longer in passing. There is the shrill wailing scream of the engine now, the heavy panting as the long train labors in. With the breadth of the village between, Margaret seems to herself to see how it draws up to the station—some one tears open a car-door—

Of course it is far too early yet to look for him; other eyes would be upon the watch—old, faded eyes, weary of watching, which had the right, no doubt, to the first glimpse. The telegram had been for Miss Alethea, but she had mentioned to Kate that no doubt Roger would have her bring him down that very night to see his old friends at the Burnley house.

Of course it is far too early yet, Margaret reiterates; yet she has dressed in a tremor of haste—he always liked her in white—and then, to calm her restlessness, took up that book, which she thrusts from her now, and leans both arms upon the sill, and looks down blankly on the rose-garden below. There is the light roll of wheels now and then over the graveled path, the flutter of another white dress through the greenery. Usually, it is Margaret's part to wheel the garden-chair up and down there—but this evening she has not even heeded that some one took her place.

For, after eight years—

When Rip Van Winkle awoke out of his enchanted sleep upon the mountain-side, and once more trod the familiar village street, it was with no more bewildered sense of having last trodden it yesterday, than is just now making confusion in the heart of a man sauntering in the late spring twilight through Little Medlington, down toward the river. He has separated himself from the evening stream of passengers from the railway station on the edge of town, and with a keen glance here and there from under the slouched rim of his hat, has been striding rapidly along the shortest way, until he is in sight of the quaint old weather-beaten brick house that fronts upon its garden upon the river's brim, and turns its many-windowed gable on the street. When he sees that, he slackens his pace and comes slowly on.

Has the house-door been standing open thus, all these long years, within its bowed Venitian blinds? The man feels like one moving in a dream of the past, as he goes by, with a glance

[Written expressly for Godey's Lady's Book.]

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ.

Authors of "Ingremsco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Through the pass of By-and-by
You go to the valley of Never."

Day is over; twilight darkens in the windows, gray and blank.

Margaret lets her book fall in her lap. The dusk has blurred the lines to her—but yet that last paragraph she has been reading, seems to lie clear and distinct under her eyes. Perhaps it is because she has had to strain them a little, to make out the last words, and so those have come slowly and impressively; at any rate, the sentences are these:

"There are women who live all their lives long in the cold, white moonlight of other people's reflected joy. It is not a bad kind of light to live in, after all. It may leave some dark, ghostly corners of the heart unwarmed; but like the other moonlight, it lets a great deal be seen overhead that sunshine hides."

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up at the embowered porch, as if he expected to find some one there.

There is no one, however. But as he looks under the Greville rose that trails about the latticed archway of the porch, and catches a glimpse of the tangled garden beyond, he seems to see a flutter of white which is not the mere stirring of the tall seringa, or the bridal-wreath that flings its garlanded boughs to the soft beeze. And so he passes on, along the somewhat rickety vine-patched fence, with a feeling that eight years are effaced with one sweep of time's wing which has wafted him here this evening.

Yes; and there she goes, among the roses—white and rosy as themselves, in her white dress, and with her fluttering grace.

"Blossom——"

Was ever fairer one trailed by the twilight breeze across the garden path? The name is on the man's lips as he pauses at the fence; yet after all it is not spoken by him, but in a childishly impatient tone, by some one whom till now he does not see. Some one in a garden-chair, which the girl has been pushing up and down the path, and on the back of which one hand of hers is resting, while the other puts aside a trespassing branch.

"Blossom," the querulous voice says again; "there is some one there. See what he wants, child—send him away—we'll have no tramps here."

The girl turns round, and looks; and then she hurries across to the gate under the great apple-tree. The petals of the apple blossoms come floating down, flushed and hurried, to claim her as akin to them, as they nestle in the shining braids of hair, and on the pretty shoulder.

"Blossom!"

Two "flower-soft hands" flutter down over the gate, at the call, and are taken into the man's grasp as he comes up.

"Is it you, Roger? But of course I know it is; even if we had not been expecting you this evening, I should still have known you anywhere."

"And I you, Blossom."

There is something in the man's voice which is not in her frank greeting; something in his intent gray eyes which they do not find in hers, for all their searching into them. Roger Gillespie stifles back a sigh.

"Yet time does bring his changes, Blossom, after all. When we parted eight years ago, it was not after this cool fashion."

Even in the twilight, he can see her vivid blush, which shows she understands his meaning, though she answers:

"Eight years! you can't expect me to remember. But we are not parting now, Roger; when we do, it will be quite soon enough to compare times and fashions."

"When we do? Blossom I used to think, when once I came back from my exile, we would never part again."

There is a startled air about her as she listens; evidently the words are new and strange to her. But she has not time to wonder at them; an interruption comes:

"Blossom, send the fellow away. It is not safe to stand talking to tramps."

As the thick, uncertain utterance reaches her, the girl glances over her shoulder with a troubled gesture. "Dear papa, it is no tramp. We are coming presently. Roger, you won't mind—it is papa—and you know—"

"I know." He gently stops the apologetic tone. "You must not think I could rest ignorant of anything that has befallen you in all these years. I never wrote to you, because I could not, without saying what was in my heart. Do not suppose I did not hear of you. All that I heard, went to make of the boyish romance a man's hope. But the life of a struggling engineer in South America was not one to ask a girl to share; therefore, I did not write. The struggle is over now—"

He breaks off. Her startled attitude, as she stands half-turned from him, glancing over her shoulder up the garden path, as if she fain would follow it to the house, where a just-kindled lamp beckons through the trees, does not encourage him to ask anything just now. In his pause, she falters:

"I don't think I understand. So young as—"

"I have said, it was a boyish romance. Let the past go then, Blossom, though I *had* hoped to bring some faintest influence out of it, to help me now. But it shall go hard if the present can't be made to serve my turn," he says, under his breath. "At least, no one has plucked the Blossom yet?"

"It is such an ordinary little Blossom, Roger," she says, half laughing, half embarrassed; "no one has wanted it."

He reaches up, and breaks off a fragrant spray overhead.

"The sweetest things bloom at our doors in the old home. I have missed just these, among all the tropical splendors over the sea there. Let us go halves, little friend; fasten these in for me, will you?"

A slight friendly office, which she cannot refuse, when he makes it such a mere matter of course. She puts his part of the divided spray into his button-hole, and tucks her half away amidst her golden braids, where the other petals placed themselves. She would have done the same, had she known any one was watching. As for Roger Gillespie, his eyes follow the pretty movements of her fingers with a strange intentness, as if he were learning them and her by heart. Eight

years—has he been thinking of her all that while, and yet not known her until now? and yet not loved her until now? For he is conscious of a new thrill, which had not been in his calmer thoughts of her. The boyish romance, the man's hope, are, as it were, faint smouldering embers kindling into full warmth as she breathes upon them near. The wind has loosened a bit of the apple-blossom from her hair, and it comes floating down against his hand, and he catches it and puts it to his lips while she is not looking. Would he have done the same, had he known some one was watching?

Some one standing at an upper window of the house, who has been observing the whole scene. Some one who has not moved until now, except, as he came up, to clasp her hands with a gesture which was almost a thanksgiving.

Now, they fall apart, in a slow, hopeless way; and she moves back from the window in her white dress, too.

One moment; then the hands begin, in a sort of desperate impatience, to tear off the white dress, and to put on a dull gray, which, awhile ago, she had flung off disdainfully across that chair. She needs no light to do it, the gloaming still lends her some, and she is putting on no ornaments save the brooch that fastens the linen collar. But after she has finished, she does light her candle, and carries it shaded to her mirror, and looks in.

Twilight draws one picture of her; candlelight another.

That by twilight might almost be taken, at a first glance, for the portrait of the young girl yonder at the gate. There is the same general contour, though the cheek has lost its roundness and the mouth its dimple; and the temples are sunken just a little, less beneath the weight of years than of care and thought. But candlelight puts sharper touches to the picture: marks some weary curves of unforgettén griefs about the mouth, a troubled line upon the brow, and pales the blush-rose tint to white, takes all the merry glint from the blue eyes, and traces here and there a silvery thread amidst the hair, the gold of which is dulled to brown, and waves less thickly from the temples than it used. One looking at this candlelight portrait, set in the mirror's frame, would have no thought of tender blossoms, but of a woman who has borne the burden and heat of the day. And if a calmer time had followed, as if life's twilight were already closing in—neutral-tinted, chilly perhaps—

For one long moment the face in the mirror has a sadder meaning than that—the grayness, the ghastliness of despair—in it. But she forces herself to look on steadily, there on her knees, until that bitterness of death is past, and she can smile into the unexpectant, faded face of every day. Who but she need ever know that for one breathing-

space her life had seemed to bloom into a second blossoming? She smiles at the vain expectation now; the second blossoming is always evanescent, bare of fruitage. But—they need not know.

They! Is it any wonder that as she rises from her knees, she is drawn to the window again, and stands there watching them? The girl is opening the gate at last to let him through—their hands meet on the latch, and he keeps hers in his an instant longer than he need, then draws it in his arm with a quiet air of possession which the woman up there at the window understands, though the girl at his side does not. Then the two come sauntering arm in arm up the short path, to the invalid's chair, apparently in no haste to reach it. There is a stop there—a hesitating introduction of:

"Roger, papa—Roger Gillespie, you know, who used to be here so long ago."

A dazed uplifting of the gray old face which has lost its eager look, a sort of fumbling after the old habit of courtesy, as the palsied hand reaches out for the young man's.

"Roger—Roger," the quavering voice says, vaguely, "yes, yes, I know—it is you have brought him, Blossom."

How much of conscious meaning the words have in them, the girl cannot tell—Roger's swift glance at her has laid a stress on them, which deepens the color in her face, and makes her lashes fall. And then he comes to her side, and together they wheel the chair up to the porch steps.

It is as they pass directly under that upper window that the girl says:

"I must take papa in out of the night air; you won't mind going into the drawing-room, and waiting—oh—" she interrupts herself with a touch of self-reproach in her happy young voice—"how could I have forgotten? You have not yet seen my sister. I wonder if she is expecting you by this time? And she will be wondering where I am."

"She'll not be thinking of us," the man answers carelessly. "If *you* had half forgotten me, I can't expect *her* to remember. I'll wait here until you come back; I won't go in until then. Only one moment first—tell me, were you waiting at the gate for me, Blossom?"

Blossom! At the word, the woman's hands loose their clutching hold upon that window-sill above and go up to the throat of her dull gray gown, trembling upon the brooch as if they would unfasten it. She half stoops, reaching out after the white dress which lies crumpled together on the floor at her feet. But she draws herself up with a faint, self-disdainful smile. Blossom! Was there ever one who fits the name so fairly as that young creature at his side?

When, after comfortably depositing the old man in his easy chair, in the library, for his customary twilight nap, the girl returns for her visitor,

the two make their appearance together in the drawing-room, through the white curtains of the window opening down upon the porch, they find the elder sister leaning back in her chair, under the lamp-light, a square of embroidery in her hands, and the colored wools laid out in piles in her lap and on the table at her elbow.

"Oh, Margaret, here is Roger," cries the girl, breathlessly, entering.

Margaret lifts her head, a calm contrast to the other's eagerness—lifts her head slowly, and sees the figure standing behind the girl in the dark background of the window. The eyes of the man and woman meet for the first time since that evening, eight long years ago, when they two parted just here.

Margaret keeps that memory bravely out of her eyes now; and it is not in Roger's as he looks across at her. For it is not the blooming, glowing girl he left, whom he sees; but a grave woman, something cold and still, on whom the lamp-light shines, and spares no altered line, no faded tint, as she must have known it would not. She shows every day of her twenty-eight years, lengthened by all the griefs with which the last eight have been doubled. The man yonder, eager, impetuous, full of vigorous life that ran warmly enough through his veins a moment since, stands chilled in her cool presence, and as one in a confused dream gazes across at her. Or is he dreaming? Has he not been dreaming all these years, and only just awakes?

It is no ghost of his old love that looks out upon Roger Gillespie through her quiet eyes. A ghost might have brought him back to her, with piteous appeal in its white face—but this calm woman simply looks at him as if there were no past, as if there never had been any other life for her more vivid than the stillness in which she sits, and lays down her embroidery—first sticking in her needle—and puts out her hand to him.

"Roger knows I am very glad to see him. He won't mind my not rising, for I have just sorted all these treacherous blue and green wools."

And Roger crosses the floor as if it were swaying dizzily with him; and goes and takes her hand in his. While it yet lies there, she is speaking to the little sister:

"Blossom, dear, if you would ring for tea—I hope Roger has not been so long away in foreign parts, that he has forgotten the old home customs, but will take a cup of tea with us."

"Blossom—"

It is Roger's voice that repeats the word, hoarse and low. Not to the young girl—she does not hear it, for she is moving toward the door.

"Perhaps Hussy can give us something better than just a cup of tea to-night, in honor of Roger's arrival," she is saying. "I'll go and inquire into her resources."

The door shuts upon her, and the two are alone

together. Well, what matter? It is a thing that may often happen; Margaret knows she must bear it without flinching, first as well as last.

"Blossom—"

Whether he has absently let her hand fall, or whether it has withdrawn itself, it is busying itself now among the tinted wools, laying one skein against another, as if intent upon the grouping of their hues. She does not look up, as she answers:

"You are wondering how little May got that old forgotten name of mine? It is quite hers, now; every one forgets I ever had it, as well as the 'Daisy,' from which mamma first gave it me, you know. The child does not know I ever had it, nor how she gained it. But since papa's stroke, after a long interval his memory came back, just a little—not enough to recognize me, I had changed so much; but to recognize the likeness in the child to me before I had changed. And papa took her for me—he has called her his Blossom ever since—"

If there is a break in her clear voice, it is just at the last, over her father's name. That is so natural; how is Roger to know the double pang that catches her breath, in that she has outlived her bloom for father and for lover both?

"She is wonderfully like you," he says, after a pause, filled with the thought of whom that first pronoun shows.

"Like me as I was, not am. Like me when I was young."

With an effort Roger lifts his eyes from the floor and looks at her in a troubled way. *She* is not troubled—she is drawing the thread through the needle with steady fingers.

"When you were young!" he says, with an uneasy laugh. "Have you forgotten you are just my age?"

"Am I? No, not quite—I am seven weeks younger. But, Roger, change those weeks into as many years, and give them to me instead of to yourself, and you will come nearer to our comparative ages. Women age more rapidly than men, perhaps. You are young still; you are climbing up, and are not tired of the climb. While I—my way of life slopes down the other side; slopes slowly, it may be, but at the end is rest."

She keeps all sadness from her voice, as she says this; every tone which might hint to him that just to-night—to-night, when she stood at the height of all her hopes—she has begun to descend upon the other side. She has let her work fall in her lap, folding her hands over it, and gazing before her with the calm outlook which the old have when they speak of rest. Roger sees, and his heart smites him with that pity with which he never dreams her whole soul and body are reaching for herself.

"You are wrong—wrong; you are too young

to put life from you so," he cries, and falters on that last word.

For one breathing-space, she wonders why; then she hears a merry, lilting voice coming this way along the hall—a voice his ear has been the first to catch. At that, she looks straight up at him, and sees his eyes turn in confusion from her face. He says, in a hurried way, still listening to that voice, even while he speaks:

"I forgot—I had but a moment this evening, just to announce myself. I have not been to Aunt Alethea yet. I will come again, and I must see Kate, and you will tell me of Delphine and all—but to-night you will excuse me, you and May."

He is holding out his hand, and Margaret puts hers into it, as he ends his stammering speech.

"Blossom," she corrects his last word. "Stay, I am not shaking hands with you, for I don't intend to let you go, just yet."

"You are very kind, but—"

"Roger, answer me one word." She is standing now, her other hand laid on his with a detaining clasp. "If I am wrong, you will forget it—but are you fleeing from my darling out there? Roger, are you trying to hold yourself bound by some shadowy, unspoken vow to the Blossom faded long ago, which this other Blossom, fairer than she ever was, has made you forget?"

He does not answer the still voice in words; it is his face speaks for him—his face, with that dark flush of pain in it. His eyes are on the ground again; hers dare soften just an instant, as she says;

"I never held you bound; and Roger, do you think that I, whose youth and love-time are well over, as I said, can grudge youth and love to her? There is but one last Blossom left on the old stem; if you can gather it—"

"Heigho! daisies and buttercups—" lilts the careless voice outside the door, sinking low as it draws near. A slight clatter of china and glass sounds the accompaniment, and the girl holds the door open for a servant to pass in with a tray.

"You see, Aunt Hussy and I have been putting our heads together to ward off starvation, Roger."

There she stops short, for somehow there is a ghost of a scene still lingering in the room. Margaret is the one to exorcise it with a smile.

"You are just in time, my Blossom. Roger was trying to say good-by, fearing starvation in some shape, perhaps. He will not fear it now. Here, child, come gather up these worsteds I've let fall, and Roger may help you, while I pour out tea and take papa his cup."

Is not life made up so of trifles? The hours come and the hours go, thrusting their trivial tasks into hands which weakly let them fall, or steadily take hold of them one by one. And the cup we

pour to others need not be a bitter one, because that which some heedless hand holds to our own lips may be full of wormwood, and we drain it to the dregs.

THE END.

A PERPLEXING CASE.

WE had been spending our vacation in a pretty Ohio town—never mind its name—and started for home in the early part of November. We walked down the hill toward the depot, exchanging few words. Frank's heart was full. He had offered himself and been declined with thanks. The town in which so undeserved an affront had been bestowed upon one of the most deserving of men shall not receive the distinction of being named in this chronicle: and I warn the reader now that neither he nor—still more earnestly, madam—you need anticipate that Frank is to be recalled and a *yes* substituted for a *no* in time to give us a marriage at the end of the chapter. No such thing occurred. Marriages are such hackneyed things in fiction that I am not going to depart from simple and most singular truth in order to lug one in here just to keep up a conventional appearance for which I have not the slightest respect. If there had been fewer marriages in the world there would be less trouble. Men would not be constantly throwing themselves at the feet of silly or heartless women whose vanity is gratified by manly devotion, and who, when love is sought, show that the gaudy object of faithful attention is all vanity and cares more for fine tailoring, graceful courtesies, and judicious gifts than for the noblest mind, the most upright soul, the most generous spirit. The girl who refused Frank Benson will live to rue it. I hope she will. But let it be understood at once there was no reconsideration of the

* See Marini, *Papiri diplom.*, preface.

† See Martene, *Script. vet. coll.*, ii, p. 1223 et seq. Huillard Bréholles in *Notices et extraits des MSS. de la bibl. imp.*, xxi, p. ii, p. 267, etc. Bethmann in Pertz *Archiv.*, xii, p. 203.

motion. It was laid for ever on the table, and the meeting was adjourned *sine die*.

We had worked very hard during the summer months while the other fellows of the counting-room were off fishing and boating and picnicking, and our *congé* extended over the latter fortnight of October and the first half of November. I was not in love; with the help of the most practical kind of common sense, I never will be. But Frank was, and he was terribly in earnest. I should think that the very infection from him would have made her take the disease; she must have been mailed with cold steel selfishness to resist his worship and his warmth. I used to sit smoking in the sunny corner of the veranda while Frank was up at her house, as I supposed; and many a time through the white mist which enveloped me I was surprised to discern the two emerging from the skirt of the woods, his face grave, pleading, sad in its expression, hers coy and teasing. Frank never said much about it. He usually carried back in his hand a bunch of scarlet and russet leaves—oak and elm and sumac—with clusters of crimson berries or a few ferns, and, as he threw them into my lap, would say gravely:

"The woods are growing more and more beautiful every day."

"Humph!" was my usual response, for I knew the lad's heart was being wrung more and more every day, and I wished that she would say something harsh and bitter to him which would annihilate the lover, arouse the man, and wake him up to see her as I did. I ventured once to undertake an experiment which, had it been permitted to go on, might have contributed to this result. Between whiffs I put both my feet up lazily on the railing of the veranda, and said with courage:

"Frank, do you remember the remark Sheridan made when he was accused of being in love with Mrs. Siddons?"

"No," he answered, looking up with an air of anxious weariness. He was too tired to care much about Sheridan or Mrs. Siddons, but he was anxious to hear anything about a man who had been suspected of being in love.

"He said he would as soon think of being enamored of the Archbishop of Canterbury."

"Oh!" And he coolly puffed away. "He was very witty."

"And I would as soon think of being enamored of—"

He was standing over me instantly with a glare. "You might wait until your counsel is asked, sir."

He threw his cigar angrily away, and walked off briskly with

his hands in his pockets. The experiment, you see, did not go far, and did not accomplish anything worth mention.

We had put our travelling necessities into one satchel, run a cane through it, and carried it ourselves to the depot. The day was dull, chilly, gray ; there was a feeling of snow in the air ; indeed, it seemed like early winter. We had not to wait long. The thundering roar, the long snort and short squeaks of the train diminished into the petty clatter of a rural station. As we stood waiting for the alighting passengers to step off an amusing silhouette inside a window caught my eye. Black curly hair softened the profile of the head ; a low forehead, a beak for a nose, a small, piercing black eye, no moustache or beard, white, sharp teeth gleaming in what must have been a rapid conversation, a short, round chin, a long, thin neck, a sharp-pointed collar, a black tie. In an instant we were in the coach. Oddly enough, our seats were with the beaked person. One seat had been turned back, making room for four facing each other, two and two ; there were two vacant places, and we dropped into them, Frank taking the back, I the front, so that we faced each other. The beaked individual was Frank's mate, and he had been talking to a florid and stupid youth with one eye, whom I cast a sly glance at when I got the chance, and whose chubby red hand, resting on the cushion, seemed so near my pocket that I reflected with a sense of recovered safety that my wallet was on my left side, and I gave it a grip of congratulation. On the floor, between the legs of the silhouetted traveller, and apparently the object of much solicitude on his part, for he watched it keenly, was what looked at first like a brown leathern portmanteau ; but it was, I speedily discovered, a box of some kind, veneered in imitation of rosewood, with little bands of cedar inlaid around the edges. A pair of leathern handles were securely fastened upon it. Except that it was not so thick, its dimensions were about the same as those of our satchel. The lock was slightly out of order, for he frequently pressed the sides together until the clasp clicked ; but the next jolt partly loosened it, and he said to his red-faced friend that when he reached Cincinnati he should have it properly repaired. His friend bade him good-by at the next station, and Frank and I looked pityingly at each other, for we knew we should soon make the beak's acquaintance.

But we were mistaken. He turned his back upon Frank and began a study of the landscape through which we were being hurried at thirty miles an hour. By watching as much of his eye as I could see I was soon convinced that his mind was elsewhere.

His eyes were not the "windows of his soul"; they were sentinels in masquerade, watching lest the meditative tenant of the tent within should be impertinently disturbed. Out of the window he gazed as we sped and sped; but his gaze was sightless. He saw nothing of the dreary fields, brown and barren or covered with stubble; nothing of the purple and gold of the melancholy woods, through which excited birds flew as if conscious that the flock was gone and they had loitered too long and been lost; nothing of the snow which lazily faltered between heaven and earth, doubting whether it really wanted to come down and establish winter before the trees were bare; nothing of the long, low, moaning sighs of the moist wind which made the windows rattle fitfully; nothing of the cattle which raised their alarmed heads at the noise of the train, and, as we hurried past, resumed their vain effort to find toothsome grass, and lowed after us in quest of sympathy. What was this man's name? Where was he going? What was his business? What was he thinking about? A sigh, unmistakably involuntary, from Frank arrested my wondering imagination. His eyes, bent on the floor and vacancy, were wet. He was unconscious of the whole world. So intense was his self-occupation that, had he commenced an incoherent soliloquy, I should not have been in the least surprised. Indeed, I feared that he might, and it was prudent to recall him to intelligent consciousness in order to protect him against a possible exhibition of weakness for which he would for ever after reproach himself. The easiest, simplest, least ostentatious way was to tread on his foot.

What a cry! It took my breath away. It was half yell, half groan. Anger and pain were in his eyes, the muscles of his face were drawn as if he were suffering excruciating torture, the tears spurted from his eyes, and from between his clenched teeth he hissed at me, *sotto voce*:

"Confound you! I told you that corn was giving me a great deal of trouble."

Well, well! I had been sentimentally weeping over the mental desolation of my friend; I had pictured the indescribable agony which he must be enduring because of the cruel deception a girl had practised upon him; I had wept, metaphorically, over his broken heart; and it was nothing but a corn!—nothing but a callous excrescence retaining an acute nervous sensitiveness, greatly afflicted by sudden pressure, by the unexpected impingement of another man's boot, representing a most friendly intention. I laughed loud enough to attract the inquiring eyes of half a dozen

persons, whose curiosity died out as suddenly as it had been inspired. The beak continued to look out of the window. Frank's characteristic good nature got the better of him. Whether his malady was cutaneous or cardiac, he forgot it, and laughed until he shook all over. The tears fell on his cheeks out of pure hilarity, and I cried in jocose derision, as he wiped them away with his dainty silk handkerchief:

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depths of some divine despair."

I beg your pardon," exclaimed the beak, suddenly turning upon us. "You are mistaken. Tears are not from the depths of some divine despair. If you don't know what they mean it is exceedingly easy to find out. They emerge from the lachrymal apparatus. They are simply the product of a gland and its servant nerves and muscles. The gland secretes the fluid, the nerves and muscles call 'em out and make a tiny cascade upon each cheek. I do not deny that there is a subtle emotional connection between the finest sensibilities of man and the lachrymal gland with which physiology has nothing to do, and which no mental scientist has yet fully explained—perhaps never will; but I reaffirm that tears do not come from the 'depths of some divine despair,' but from the lachrymal glands."

He looked at us through his pair of keen black eyes, and then, as if embarrassed by his abrupt intrusion into our acquaintance, produced cards from his pocket, and handed them to us, saying with almost the suave air of a gentleman:

"I beg your pardon once again. I had no right to address you. I hope you will forgive me." He bowed, turned his back upon us and his beak to the window. The card read:

H. LE FEVRE,
Optician.

Frank wrote upon the back of his, and handed it silently to me:

"He is an escaped lunatic, or a shrewd pickpocket, or what they call out West a 'confidence-man.'"

I was convinced that Frank's corn had been cruelly hurt by my insolent boot. I was also convinced that he was violently prejudiced against this optician simply because the intruder had intimated that tears were the expression of anything but a bruised soul; for Frank, if he had a corn, had a broken heart—I was sure

he had. It was unmanly to condemn so wantonly the stranger whom Tennyson had introduced to us, and whose study of physiology had made him accurate, even if nature had given him an uncomely nose, which all the resources of art would never succeed in improving. The semicircle is the line of beauty everywhere except on the nose.

I wrote back to Frank: "I am sure he is only eccentric. He is so sorry for having intruded upon us that I sincerely pity him. I think we ought to help him out of his predicament."

He rejoined: "He is a thief."

This was the mad fancy of a disordered brain.

I wrote back: "Come, be generous. Give him the benefit of the doubt. I think he is honest, eccentric, and very sorry for having impulsively intruded upon us. Let us assure him we are not offended."

Frank looked gravely at me as he read, and said inarticulately: "Never!"

"Then you will excuse me for a few minutes."

"As you like."

I handed Mr. Le Fevre my card. He bowed his thanks, crossed his legs, poised his beak straight at mine—for I really had forgotten that my own nose has an uncommon convexity—and said:

"Eye is a wonderful organ, sir."

He had a slight foreign accent, a mixture of French and German—from Alsace, perhaps.

I could say nothing in reply except a commonplace "It is indeed, sir."

"Wonderful organ! wonderful! Are you an evolutionist?"

"To a degree. I think it reasonable to believe that the Creator accomplished his work according to general laws, in consequence of which we see a suggestive symmetry throughout the animal kingdom."

"But you don't think a wiggle wiggled itself, then begot a worm, and the worm begot a fish, and the fish begot a reptile, and the reptile begot a bird, and the bird begot a monkey, and the monkey begot man?"

The solemn gravity with which this question was put made even Frank laugh.

"No. I think the materialists of contemporaneous evolution confound correspondences with effects. It is true that dogs, horses, and men have ears, but that does not convince me that man's exquisite organ of hearing has been modified by any intelligence, voluntary or involuntary, on the part of dog or horse."

Indeed, there are certain lower animals whose ears are more acute than ours."

"Precisely. Just so with eyes. It is a fact of optics that the eyes of certain monkeys and of men have common peculiarities not found in the eyes of other animals. But that proves nothing. It proves nothing more than tails. The Darwinian theory is that the lowest order of monkeys ought to have the longest tails, and that the tail shortens until it disappears in man; in other words, that man is a monkey without a tail, or that the monkey is a man with a tail. But it has been indisputably shown by Mivart that all apes have not tails, but that the apes nearest, according to Darwin, to man have the longest tails. So the theory falls to the ground. Then, again, as to the toes. In the development of the hallex as compared with the pollex Mivart says that the little squirrel monkey is as nearly human as the gorilla, while the *ligamentum teres*, always present in men and the chimpanzee, is always absent in the gorilla and orang. In a word, the highest apes are not nearly so like man as many other and lower forms, and the theory of a symmetrical evolutionary development is non-suited, thrown out of court, dismissed for want of a prosecutor."

Frank looked at me significantly, as if to remind me that he had said this man was an escaped lunatic. My interest in him only increased.

"You enjoy the study of natural science, then?"

"Very much, sir, very much. But I have not had leisure enough to devote to it. Optical science and optical art are both so recent that he who would become thoroughly expert in them must necessarily abandon himself to them alone. It is said, sir, that 'law is a jealous mistress.' The same is true of every department of knowledge and skill. The Admirable Crichton was only a hyperbole. It was said of him that he had everything but common sense. Of what use were ten languages and half a dozen arts to a man without common sense?"

Frank looked dolorously at me, with a melancholy expression of "worse and worse." Probably he anticipated that Le Fevre would grow violent soon, and have to be put off the train by main strength, or chained, hand and foot, in a freight-car.

"Optical science," I went on, "is indeed of strictly modern origin."

"Assuredly. The anatomy of the eye was almost unknown even to those physicians who professed of old to be oculists, and who so imperfectly understood pseudoscopic effects and the dis-

eases of the organ that persons suffering from defective or impaired vision were sometimes condemned as possessed of evil spirits, sometimes tortured as witches, and sometimes made incurable by the application of quack remedies. It remained for a later age to invent the microscope and spectroscope. Why, sir, there were no spectacles until a monk in Florence in the thirteenth century thought of a pair to help him read his devotions. The eye-glasses now so generally in use and so effective in preserving sight are the product of our own time. The good old monk would scarcely recognize in the spectacles of to-day his primitive idea of a magnifying-glass. The old-style goggles, mounted in shell and horn and heavy metal, must have been a heavy load on the nose. The spectacles and spring eye-glasses now manufactured in Sheffield and Birmingham, mounted in almost invisible steel frames, weigh less than a quarter of an ounce. Science, endeavoring to remedy the ravages of age and disease in this noble sense, has been almost competing with the sagacity of nature. But nature is still far ahead, my dear sir. We can't come up to nature yet, as you Americans say."

Frank appeared to be mollifying his prejudices. He was actually listening respectfully.

"The construction of the eye of man is his most amazing part," said he, and then blushed, as if he were surprised at finding himself saying something both foolish and sensible.

"Not more so than the marvellous ingenuity with which the inferior forms of life have been equipped with this organ. Notwithstanding that man believes that he enjoys the highest conceivable pleasure through the medium of sight, it is not true that his is the most beautiful, the most useful, the most complex eye. The old Roman philosopher says that 'Nature ever provides for her own exigencies.' Let us more accurately say that in the creation of the organ of vision, from the lowest to the superior forms of existence, God has shown his keen solicitude for the preservation of life until each creature shall have accomplished an assigned part in the immense utilities of the world. The eye is almost the first sign of animal intelligence. In the nearly formless *amoebæ* there are eyes; in those jelly-like *animalculæ* which are imperceptibly born, almost imperceptibly swim about, and unobserved die when their function in the general economy is completed, there are eyes, but not always in the head—sometimes they are even in the tail! Why? So that they may protect their feeble life from the approach of danger. They are without even rudimentary ears; the deficiency is made up in vision.

Many little animals are literally 'all eyes.' They see from every side. Faceted-eyed insects are a marvellous spectacle under the microscope. There is a beetle which has fully twenty-five thousand eyes. The large eye of most insects has a great many quadrangular or hexagonal double-convex lenses, which, when flying through the air, not only guide it safely in its mazy course, but give it electrical warning of danger from any direction. Look at the eye of the fish and of the bird. In each case it is wonderfully adapted for what we may call its station in life. In the fish the lens assumes a spherical shape and is very dense; the pupil is very large, so as to take in as much light as possible; the focus is shortened and the power increased—in a word, the eye of the fish is exactly adapted to the medium in which that animal exists, and is modified so as to serve it most efficiently in the pursuit of liberty and food. The eye of the bird, on the contrary, is designed for the glare of the sun, the force of the wind, and the perception of much longer distances than can be discerned by man. And is it not a proof of the charity of the Creator that even the stupid owl (the bird of wisdom, forsooth!) is especially remembered? Its eye is modified so as to enable it to discern all objects in a very faint light. I have sometimes thought—a mere weird fancy—that there are secret eyes in those curious plants which some naturalists have considered undeveloped animals because of their apparent sensitiveness under certain conditions. There's 'Venus's Fly-trap.' The moment an insect touches the summit of its leaf the plant, with the quickness of electricity, encloses the astonished captive, and the harder it struggles to escape the more restrains it until death settles the dispute. Is not the ambuscading vegetable a seeing animal in disguise? Did you ever observe an antlion bury itself in the sand, and, with nothing but eyes and mandibles above ground, wait for the coming of its prey? Why, gentlemen, the artifices to which the organ of sight in insects enables these tiny creatures to resort equal, and in many cases surpass, the shrewdest tricks of men."

Probably Mr. Le Fevre would have continued to amuse us in this eccentric and rambling way had we not reached the end of that part of our journey. The shadow which had temporarily flitted from Frank's face descended ominously upon it as we elbowed our way through the turbulent crowd to an omnibus. Not a word passed between us until we reached the hotel where we proposed to rest for the night. In the morning we should resume our journey eastward. We had lost Le Fevre, without as much as an *au revoir*, and had laughingly agreed that, take him all

in all, we should never see his like again, when, to our surprise, his beak appeared at the hotel register, and he wrote his name in a scrambling hand. He could not see us where we stood. Although I really felt some liking for the man, I was too tired after the ride, too hungry, and too sleepy to make an effort to resume his acquaintance. We were assigned a room about the same time that he was, and the porter started upstairs, Le Fevre's box in one hand, our satchel in the other.

Frank had no appetite, and I could not induce him to go to the dining-room. We loitered in the rotunda a few moments, and, in the hope of finding some diversion to cheer him, started out into the streets. It was dark. The street-lamps threw a narrow circle of sickly light upon the flags, which a slight snow-fall had covered with a thin layer of feathery flakes. We walked until I could walk no longer, and an inviting restaurant put an end to our aimless ramble.

The fiend of inconsistency took possession of this fellow. He began to laugh and chatter like a parrot. He repeated Le Fevre's remarks about the ant-lion and "Venus's Fly-trap," with so clever an imitation of the Alsatian's mannerism that I joined in the merriment. A horrible fear suggested that the lad was growing hysterical, possibly was getting into a spasm or fit, or that some serious nervous ailment was about to develop itself. Laughing gayly, with heavy shadows flitting over his countenance, he was the picture of mental disorder. He ordered raw oysters and lobster-salad, coffee, and mince-pie. What a repast for a sick man, sore in his heart, nervous to the highest pitch, and physically worn out! Could he sleep after such gormandizing? Sleep was just what he needed. Pointing to the indigestible mess as it was set before him, I said :

“ ‘Macbeth doth murder sleep.’ ”

“I am going to eat what I want. You do the same, will you?”

“Benson, I have borne your ill-humor with such patience as will make you ashamed of it, if you don't correct it now once for all. Your petulance and waywardness do you no credit. I tell you I'm ashamed of you.”

He brought his clenched fist down upon the table with an emphasis that made the dishes ring. A shocking scowl overspread his countenance, and he was about to apply, I fear, profanity to my too open censure. But before the words could find utter-

ance they were recalled. A pleasant but morbid smile succeeded.

"Sit down here and help me eat this stuff. Come, come! Be a good fellow. There's trouble enough in the world without our enlarging the amount that falls to our share. I haven't eaten anything for three weeks. You want me to grow lean and lank, and go about moping and miserable, because—"

His fork fell. He relapsed into chagrin. In an instant it was over. He half articulated, half hummed:

" Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Or make pale my cheeks with care
'Cause another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flow'ry meads in May,
If she be not fair for me
What care I how fair she be?

" Should my heart be grieved or pined
'Cause I see a woman kind?
Or a well-disposed nature
Joined with a lovely feature?
Be she meeker, kinder than
Turtle-dove or pelican,
If she be not kind to me
What care I how kind she be?

" Shall a woman's virtues move
Me to perish for her love?
Or her well-deservings, known,
Make me quite forget my own?
Be she with that goodness blest
Which may gain her name of best,
If she be not good to me
What care I how good she be?

" Great or good, or kind or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair;
If she love me, this believe,
I will die ere she shall grieve;
If she slight me when I woo
I can scorn and let her go;
For if she be not all for me
What care I for whom she be?"

There was much munching of crackers and crunching of celery between the lines; but he did not stop until he had finished the last verse, the fish, the coffee, the pic. "Heaven help you!"

thought I, and, to be sure that heaven should help, I took the precaution to inquire when we got back to the hotel whether there was a doctor in the house. I plucked some comfort from an affirmative reply.

We went to our room forthwith. A bright fire crackled and fumed in the grate, and quickly blazed into a thousand tongues of flame licking each other in an Eleusinian mystery. It was unnecessary to light the gas. Our overcoats were soon disposed of. Frank threw himself on the sofa; I took the easy-chair. We agreed to smoke ourselves into somnolence. There were two neat beds in the room; I should not be kicked to death by Frank's nightmare. I secretly sympathized with his digestive apparatus, and wondered what his stomach's opinion was of him.

"Where's the satchel?" he inquired.

It was not in the room. Strange! The porter had carried it up. I rang the bell. It must have been put into some other room by mistake. The loud rap made Frank jump as if a musket were discharged at his head and just missed him. The servant walked off with philosophic deliberation to inquire at the office for the missing bag.

"That fellow will never die of hurry," said Frank. In half an hour he condescended to return. Knew nothing about it. It was the day-porter who had carried it up. He had gone home for the night. The night-porter knew nothing about it. The day-porter would be back at five o'clock in the morning. The clerk sent his compliments, and hoped that the gentlemen would not be put to any inconvenience.

Frank was already overcome with heavy drowsiness. The lobster had done its worst; nor rap nor clatter, domestic hopes, mince-pie—nothing could touch him farther. I removed his boots, helped him to the nearer bed, and he fell instantly into a sonorous slumber. He snored loud enough to wake up the occupants of the adjoining rooms, if there were any sleepers in them.

But no sleep for me. Nothing to read. Plenty of good things in the satchel. What was to be done? The pictures in the fire and a bottle of champagne. It was brought with a promptness which did not go unrewarded, and it was good. Doubtless it never paid a penny to the government. Must have been smuggled through. Removing my boots, I sat with my feet on the fender, smoking, sipping between cigars, dreaming about nothing and everything, and watching the myriad of fan-

tastic shapes in the fire. What was it? Oh! yes, I'm getting drowsy. "Nature's soft nurse" doth

". . . weigh my eyelids down,
And steep my senses in forgetfulness."

I must go to bed, and quickly. Can it be possible this champagne was "medicated"? I cannot find the bed! Halloo! what's that? Rap on! I shall not open the door this time of night.

"I told you before Le Fevre was a thief. He stole the satchel."

It was Frank. But he was profoundly asleep.

Rap—RAP—RAP!

"What do you want?" "Here's your satchel."

I unlocked the door. The wanderer had come back, then. Le Fevre was *not* a thief. The porter threw it upon the floor with an impatient thud. I shut the door with an impatient thud. On the vacant bed I fell, and was consciously losing consciousness. I had a sort of dim idea that as the satchel was thrown upon the floor the lock was broken. But it was soon all over with me. Dreamless sleep put a summary stop to speculations and suspicions.

I was awakened under the most startling circumstances. Hours had passed; it was the early gray of a wintry morning. The fire still cast a fitful light through the room, sending strange and uneven flashes into the shadowy corners. The curtains were drawn high, and the dim starlight was fading into the dimmer daylight. It was neither night nor day; it was just dark enough to throw a ghastly glamour over every object. I should not have been astonished to discover palpable ghosts on every side, to have seen them crawling out from under the beds, sliding out of the clothes-closets, popping up from the carpet, and tapping me familiarly on the shoulder; oozing out of the ceiling, clammy and horned; walking in through the closed door, mailed and hoofed, or flying about like bats, whispering sepulchral horrors into each other's ears and mine. I am not given to such fancies. It was undoubtedly Frank's repeated moans and ejaculations which had awakened me with difficulty, and had poured into my imagination through reluctant senses these horrible phantasmagoria.

And he? Great heavens, what a picture! He was on his knees, clutching with both hands the foot-board of his bed, his eyes wild with terror, his nostrils dilated, his mouth wide open, his breath quick and hard, his short hair almost erect, his whole

body shaking as if with a mighty chill, and great beads of cold sweat standing on his forehead. He had thrown his coat and cravat off, and unfastened his collar, as if to get more air. He gazed intensely into one corner of the room, as if his eyes were riveted there.

I tried to speak. My tongue would not serve my will. I tried to raise myself out of my bed and go to him. I succeeded in putting my feet on the floor, and was, fortunately, near enough to the arm-chair to clutch it, or I should have fallen at the sight.

What sight? Language cannot tell it. Imagination cannot conceive it. Eyes, eyes everywhere! Nothing but eyes! Eyes black, blue, gray, hazel, brown—and not even matched or in pairs. They glared, they sneered, they laughed; the shapeless beings in whose heads they were pointed bony fingers at us, taunted us, laughed at us, hissed us, spat out venom at our helplessness. To save my brain I turned my head away. But no, no, no! Wherever I looked, there they were! Black, blue, gray, brown—here in demon-like groups, there in blurred masses all run into each other, in another spot a single eye blazing in the reflection of the fire. They studded the base board with their gleams, they shone upon the carpet with the leer of fiends. I ventured to raise my glance to the walls, to the ceiling. Infinite relief!—none were there. They were not climbing devils, then. Hark! It was Frank's voice. He whispered like one in the grave, half-covered with pelting earth, and content to remain in the coffin:

“Are we damned?”

I was not sure. The door was slightly ajar; the wind whistled down the long corridor, and a sudden gust blew in, almost smothering the fire. What! did my ears hear aright? Have these fiends tongues? They gibber to each other with a clicking accent! They have moved about. New groups are formed; their heads are in consultation; their eyes sway hither and thither—what fiendish plot are they concocting? A low, wailing sound broke from Frank. He was muttering something, while, with his left hand, he brushed the perspiration off his face, and with the other made fantastic gesture. And he quoted Dante, with a lugubrious emphasis. It was like a man talking in his sleep. He still thought himself among the for-ever-lost.

Was not this a dream? I walk a few steps across the floor, but every muscle is limp with terror; the frightful spectacle still stares at me wherever my glance falls. Everywhere eyes meet mine—eyes, eyes, eyes, nothing but eyes.

There is a tumult in the hall. Voices are disputing about something. Yes—no—one of them is Le Fevre's. They approach the door.

"I am sure it was in here I put it."

"But this is not my room." That was Le Fevre.

"Well, I suppose we can get it out." That was the porter, the man who had brought our satchel up and thrown it into the room some time after midnight. His brawny hand gives a thundering rap. Frank leaps to the floor, strikes an attitude of self-defence, and cries, as if expecting to see gigantic demons enter, "*Come on!*"

The beak bows, smiles, begs our pardon, *so* sorry, *so* *sorry* to disturb us at so unseemly an hour, but—

"But what?" roars Frank with fury.

"I brought the gentleman's case in here last night by mistake," said the porter. "I thought it was your satchel. Here's yours."

"His case! What case?" I gasped.

"My case of glass eyes," politely interjected Le Fevre. "If I were not going away on an early train I should not have presumed to disturb you. I offer my profound apologies." And the beaked Alsatian bowed and bowed. Frank sat on the easy-chair and industriously wiped his forehead and face. I dropped, very gratefully to Le Fevre, on the sofa. The porter stepped to the fire, ignited a taper, turned the gas on, and lighted it.

"Why, why, why," said Le Fevre, with a te-he-he giggle, "just what I feared. The case fell open, and here are my glass eyes all over the floor."

Neither of us said a word.

"I have an engagement with an oculist in —."

Frank started. It was *that* town.

"What! going back there? You passed there yesterday."

This was faintly spoken, with the blandness of an invalid.

"Yes," said Le Fevre, as he opened the case at the table, picked up the vagrant tenants of its velvet spaces, and readjusted them—"yes, I had some important business to do in Cincinnati first, but I go back there on the early train to assist in putting an eye in a patient of the oculist who resides there."

I wondered why he did not go. With arms akimbo he continued:

"I am sorry for that oculist, too. Broken in spirits. Disappointed man. Would have made her a first-rate husband. Miss —"

It was she!

“—fooled him, fooled him to the top of his bent. Now she is going to marry his patient—the man who is getting in a glass eye so as to present a pleasing appearance at the wedding. Don't you remember the one-eyed young man who rode part of the way with me? But he is rich.”

I jumped over to Frank and held him firmly by the shoulders, standing at his back.

“Yes,” added Le Fevre, with a long sigh, “I often have thought, when studying the wonderful eyes of the mosquito, that women are like mosquitoes. You know, of course, gentlemen, that it is only the female mosquito that stings.”

And Le Fevre bade us good-morning.

action, he had shown skill, resolution, and energy enough, but as he sat there on his horse's back, looking round at every point of any interest to an admirer of nature with an easy, calm and unconcerned air, no one who saw him could have conceived that he had been engaged the moment before in so fierce though short a struggle. There was none of the heat of the combatant or the triumph of the victor in his air or countenance, and his placid and equable expression of face contrasted strongly with the cloud which sat upon the brow of his companion.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for my gloomy silence," said Sir Philip Hastings, at length, conscious that his demeanor was not very courteous, "but this affair troubles me. Besides certain relations which it bears to matters of private concernment, I am not satisfied as to how I should deal with the ruffian we have suffered to depart so easily. His assault upon myself I do not choose to treat harshly; but the man is a terror to the country round, committing many an act to which the law awards a very insufficient punishment, but with cunning sufficient to keep within that line, the passage beyond which would enable society to purge itself of such a stain upon it; how to deal with him, I say, embarrasses me greatly. I have committed him two or three times to prison already; and I am inclined to regret that I did not, on this occasion, when he was in the very act of breaking the law, send my sword through him, and I should have been well justified in doing so."

"Nay, sir, methinks that would have been too much," replied his companion; "he has had a full, which, if I judge rightly, will be a sufficient punishment for his assault upon you. According to the very *lex talionis*, he has had what he deserves. If he has nearly broke your arm, I think I have nearly broken his back."

"It is not his punishment for any offence to myself, sir, I seek," replied the baronet; "it is a duty to society to free it from the load of such a man whenever he himself affords the opportunity of doing so. Herein the law would have justified me, but even had it not been so, I can conceive many cases where it may be necessary for the benefit of our country and society to go beyond what the law will justify, and to make the law for the necessity."

"Brutus, and a few of his friends, did so," replied the young stranger with a smile, "and we admire them very much for so doing, but I am afraid we should hang them, nevertheless, if they were in a position to try the thing over again. The illustration of the gibbet and the statue might have more applications than one, for I sincerely believe, if we could revive historical characters, we should almost in all cases erect a gallows for those to whom we now raise a monument."

Sir Philip Hastings turned and looked at him attentively, and saw his face was gay and smiling. "You take all these things very lightly, sir," he said.

A STORY WITHOUT A NAME.*

WRITTEN FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

Continued from Page 216.

CHAPTER X.

THE two horsemen rode on their way. Neither spoke for several minutes. Sir Philip Hastings pondering sternly on all that had passed, and his younger companion gazing upon the scene around flooded with the delicious rays of sunset, as if nothing had passed at all.

Sir Philip, as I have shown the reader, had a habit of brooding over any thing which excited much interest in his breast—nay more, of extracting from it, by a curious sort of alchemy, essence very different from its apparent nature, sometimes bright, fine, and beneficial, and others dark and maleficent. The whole of the transaction just past disturbed him much; it puzzled him; it set his imagination running upon a thousand tracks, and most of them wrong ones; and thought was not willing to be called from her vagaries to deal with any other subject than that which preoccupied her.

The young stranger, on the other hand, seemed one of those characters which take all things much more lightly. In the moment of

* Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1850, by G. P. R. James, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York

"With a safe lightness," replied the stranger. "Nay, with something more," rejoined his companion; "in your short struggle with that ruffian, you sprang upon him, and overthrew him like a lion, with a fierce activity which I can hardly imagine really calmed down so soon."

"O yes it is, my dear sir," replied the stranger, "I am somewhat of a stoic in all things. It is not necessary that rapidity of thought and action, in a moment of emergency, should go one line beyond the occasion, or sink one line deeper than the mere reason. The man who suffers his heart to be fluttered, or his passions to be roused, by any just action he is called upon to do, is not a philosopher. Understand me, however; I do not at all pretend to be quite perfect in my philosophy; but, at all events, I trust I schooled myself well enough not to suffer a wrestling match with a contemptible animal like that, to make my pulse beat a stroke quicker after the momentary effort is over."

Sir Philip Hastings was charmed with the reply; for though it was a view of philosophy which he could not and did not follow, however much he might agree to it, yet the course of reasoning and the sources of argument were so much akin to those he usually sought, that he fancied he had at length found a man quite after his own heart. He chose to express no farther opinion upon the subject, however, till he had seen more of his young companion; but that more he determined to see. In the mean time he easily changed the conversation, saying, "You seemed to be a very skilful and practised wrestler, sir."

"I was brought up in Cornwall," replied the other, "though not a Cornish man, and having no affinity even with the Terse and the Tees—an Anglo Saxon, I am proud to believe, for I look upon that race as the greatest which the world has yet produced."

"What, superior to the Roman?" asked Sir Philip.

"Ay, even so," answered the stranger, "with as much energy, as much resolution, less mobility, more perseverance, with many a quality which the Roman did not possess. The Romans have left us many a fine lesson which we are capable of practising as well as they, while we can add much of which they had no notion."

"I should like much to discuss the subject with you more at large," said Sir Philip Hastings, in reply; "but I know not whether we have time sufficient to render it worth while to begin."

"I really hardly know, either," answered the young stranger; "for, in the first place, I am unacquainted with the country, and in the next place, I know not how far you are going. My course tends towards a small town called Hartwell—or, as I suspect it ought to be, Hartswell, probably from some fountain at which hart and hind used to come and drink."

"I am going a little beyond it," replied Sir Philip Hastings, "so that our journey will be

for the next ten miles together;" and with this good space of time before him, the baronet endeavored to bring his young companion back to the subject which had been started, a very favorite one with him at all times.

But the stranger seemed to have his hobbies as well as Sir Philip, and having dashed into etymology in regard to Hartwell, he pursued it with an avidity which excluded all other topics.

"I believe," he said, not in the least noticing Sir Philip's dissertation on Roman virtues—"my own belief is, that there is not a proper name in England, except a few intruded upon us by the Normans, which might not easily be traced to accidental circumstances in the history of the family or the place. Thus, in the case of Aylesbury, or Eaglestown, from which it is derived, depend upon it the place has been noted as a resort for eagles in old times, coming thither probably for the ducks peculiar to that place. Bristol, in Anglo Saxon, meaning the place of a bridge, is very easily traceable; and Costa, or Costaford, meaning in Anglo Saxon the tempter's ford, evidently derives its name from monk or maiden having met the enemy of man or womankind at that place, and having had cause to rue the encounter. All the Hams, all the Tons, and all the Sons, lead us at once to the origin of the name, to say nothing of all the points of the compass, all the colors of the rainbow, and every trade that the ingenuity of man has contrived to invent."

In vain Sir Philip Hastings for the next half hour endeavored to bring him back to what he considered more important questions. He had evidently had enough of the Romans for the time being, and indulged himself in a thousand fanciful speculations upon every other subject but that, till Sir Philip, who at one time had rated his intellect very highly, began to think him little better than a fool. Suddenly, however, as if from a sense of courtesy rather than inclination, the young man let his older companion have his way in the choice of subject, and in his replies showed such depth of thought, such a thorough acquaintance with history, and such precise and definite views, that once more the baronet changed his opinion, and said to himself, "This is a fine and noble intellect indeed, nearly spoiled by the infection of a corrupt and frivolous world, but which might be reclaimed, if fortune would throw him in the way of those whose principles have been fixed and tried."

He pondered upon the matter for some short time. It was now completely dark, and the town to which the stranger was going distant not a quarter of a mile. The little stars were looking out in the heavens, peering at man's actions like bright-eyed spies at night; but the moon had not risen, and the only light upon the path was reflected from the flashing, dancing stream that ran along beside the road, seeming to gather up all the strong rays from the air, and give them back again with interest.

"You are coming very near Hartwell," said Sir Philip, at length; "but it is somewhat difficult to find from this road, and being but little out of my way, I will accompany you thither, and follow the high road onwards."

The stranger was about to express his thanks, but the Baronet stopped him, saying, "Not in the least, my young friend. I am pleased with your conversation, and should be glad to cultivate your acquaintance if opportunity should serve. I am called Sir Philip Hastings, and shall be glad to see you at any time, if you are passing near my house."

"I shall certainly wait upon you, Sir Philip, if I stay any time in this county," replied the other. "That, however, is uncertain, for I come here merely on a matter of business, which may be settled in a few hours—indeed it ought to be so, for it seems to me very simple. However, it may detain me much longer, and then I shall not fail to take advantage of your kind permission."

He spoke gravely, and little more was said till they entered the small town of Hartwell, about half through which a large gibbet-like bar was seen projecting from the front of a house, suspending a large board, upon which was painted a star. The light shining from the windows of an opposite house fell upon the symbol, and the stranger, drawing in his rein, said, "Here is my inn, and I will now wish you good night, with many thanks, Sir Philip."

"Methinks it is I should thank you," replied the Baronet, "both for a pleasant journey, and for the punishment you inflicted on the ruffian Cutter."

"As for the first," said the stranger, "that has been more than repaid, if indeed it deserved thanks at all; and as for the other, that was a pleasure in itself. There is a great satisfaction to me in breaking down the self-confidence of one of these burly bruisers."

As he spoke, he dismounted, again wishing Sir Philip good night, and the latter rode on upon his way. His meditations, as he went, were altogether upon the subject of the young stranger; for, as I have shown, Sir Philip rarely suffered two ideas to get any strong grasp of his mind at the same time. He revolved, and weighed, and dissected every thing the young man had said, and the conclusion that he came to was even more favorable than at first. He seemed a man after his own heart, with just sufficient differences of opinion and diversities of character to make the Baronet feel a hankering for some opportunity of moulding and modelling him to his own standard of perfection. Who he could be, he could not by any means divine. That he was a gentleman in manners and character, there could be no doubt. That he was not rich, Sir Philip argued from the fact of his not having chosen the best inn in the little town, and he might also conclude that he was of no very distinguished family, as he had not thought fit to mention his own name in return for the Baronet's frank invitation.

Busy with these thoughts Sir Philip rode on but slowly, and took nearly half an hour to reach the gates of Mrs. Hazleton's park, though they stood only two miles' distance from the town. He arrived before them at length, however, and rang the bell. The lodge-keeper opened them but slowly, and putting his horse to a quicker pace, Sir Philip trotted up the avenue towards the house. He had not reached it, however, when he heard the sound of horses feet behind him, and, as he was dismounting at the door, his companion of the way rode quickly up and sprang to the ground, saying, with a laugh—

"I find, Sir Philip, that we are both to enjoy the same quarters to-night, for, on my arrival at Hartwell, I did not expect to visit this house till to-morrow morning. Mrs. Hazleton, however, has very kindly had my baggage brought up from the inn, and therefore I have no choice but to intrude upon her to-night."

As he spoke the doors of the house were thrown open, servants came forth to take the horses, and the two gentlemen were ushered at once into Mrs. Hazleton's receiving-room.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. HAZLETON was looking as beautiful as she had been at twenty—perhaps more so; for the few last years before the process of decay commences, sometimes adds rather than detracts from woman's loveliness. She was dressed with great skill and taste too; nay, even with peculiar care. The hair, which had not yet even one silver thread in its wavy mass, was so arranged as to hide, in some degree, that height and width of forehead which gave almost too intellectual an expression to her countenance—which, upon some occasions, rendered the expression (for the features were all feminine) more than of a man than that of a woman. Her dress was very simple in appearance though costly in material; but it had been chosen and fitted by the nicest art, of colors which best harmonized with her complexion, and in forms rather to indicate beauties than to display them.

Thus attired, with grace and dignity in every motion, she advanced to meet Sir Philip Hastings, frankly holding out her hand to him, and beaming on him one of her most lustrous smiles. It was all thrown away upon him indeed; but that did not matter. It had its effect in another quarter. She then turned to the younger gentleman with a greater degree of reserve in manner, but yet, as she spoke to him and welcomed him to her house, the color deepened on her cheek with a blush that would not have been lost to Sir Philip if he had been at all in the custom of making use of them. They had evidently met before, but not often; and her words, "Good evening, Mr. Marlow, I am glad to see you at my house at length," were said in the tone of one who was really glad, but did not wish to show it too plainly.

"You have come with my friend, Sir Philip

Hastings," she added; "I did not know you were acquainted."

"Nor were we, my dear madam, till this evening," replied the Baronet, speaking for himself and his companion of the road, "till we met by accident on the hill-side on our way hither. We had a somewhat unpleasant encounter with a notorious personage of the name of Tom Cutter, which brought us first into acquaintance; though, till you uttered it, my young friend's name was unknown to me."

"Tom Cutter! is that the man who poaches all my game?" said the lady, in a musing tone.

Nor was she musing of Tom Cutter, or the lost game, or of the sins and iniquities of poaching; neither one or the other. The exclamation and inquiry taken together were only one of those little half-unconscious stratagems of human nature, by which we often seek to amuse the other parties in conversation—and sometimes amuse our own outward man too—while the little spirit within is busily occupied with some question which we do not wish our interlocutors to have any thing to do with. She was asking herself, in fact, what had been the conversation with which Sir Philip Hastings and Mr. Marlow had beguiled the way—whether they had talked of her—whether they had talked of her affairs—and how she could best get some information on the subject without seeming to seek it.

She soon had an opportunity of considering the matter more at leisure, for Sir Philip Hastings, with some remark as to "dusty dresses not being fit for ladies' drawing-rooms," retired for a time to the chamber prepared for him. The fair lady of the house detained Mr. Marlow indeed for a few minutes, talking with him in a pleasant and gentle tone, and making her bright eyes do their best in the way of captivating. She expressed regret that she had not seen him more frequently, and expressed a hope, in very graceful terms, that even the painful question, which those troublesome men of law had started between them, might be a means of ripening their acquaintance into friendship.

The young gentleman replied with all gallantry, but with due discretion, and then retired to his room to change his dress. He certainly was a very good-looking young man; finely formed, and with a pleasing though not regularly handsome countenance; and perhaps he left Mrs. Hazleton other matters to meditate of than the topics of his conversation with Sir Philip Hastings. Certain it is, that when the baronet returned very shortly after, he found his beautiful hostess in a profound reverie, from which his sudden entrance made her start with a bewildered look not common to her.

"I am very glad to talk to you for a few moments alone, my dear friend," said Mrs. Hazleton, after a moment's pause. "This Mr. Marlow is the gentleman who claims the very property on which you now stand;" and she proceeded to give her hearer, partly by spontaneous explanations, partly by answers to his questions, her own view of the case between

himself and Mr. Marlow; laboring hard and skilfully to prepossess the mind of Sir Philip Hastings with a conviction of her rights as opposed to that of her young guest.

"Do you mean to say, my dear madam," asked Sir Philip, "that he claims the whole of this large property? That would be a heavy blow indeed."

"Oh, dear, no," replied the lady; "the great bulk of the property is mine beyond all doubt, but the land on which this house stands, and rather more than a thousand acres round it, was bought by my poor father before I was born, I believe, as affording the most eligible site for a mansion. He never liked the old house near your place, and built this for himself. Mr. Marlow's lawyers now declare that his grand-uncle, who sold the land to my father, had no power to sell it; that the property was strictly entailed."

"That will be easily ascertained," said Sir Philip Hastings; "and I am afraid, my dear madam, if that should prove the case, you will have no remedy but to give up the property."

"But is not that very hard?" asked Mrs. Hazleton, "the Marlows certainly had the money."

"That will make no difference," replied Sir Philip, musing; "this young man's grand-uncle may have wronged your father; but he is not responsible for the act, and I am very much afraid, moreover, that his claim may not be limited to the property itself. Back rents, I suspect, might be claimed."

"Ay, that is what my lawyer, Mr. Shanks, says," replied Mrs. Hazleton, with a bewildered look; "he tells me that if Mr. Marlow is successful in the suit, I shall have to pay the whole of the rents of the land. But Shanks added that he was quite certain of beating him if we could retain for our counsel Sargeant Tutham and Mr. Doubledo."

"Shanks is a rogue," said Sir Philip Hastings, in a calm, equable tone; "and the two lawyers you have named bear the reputation of being learned and unscrupulous men. The first point, my dear madam, is to ascertain whether this young gentleman's claim is just, and then to deal with him equitably, which, in the sense I affix to the term, may be somewhat different from legal."

"I really do not know what to do," cried Mrs. Hazleton, with a slight laugh, as if at her own perplexity. "I was never in such a situation in my life;" and then she added, very rapidly and in a jocular tone, as if she were afraid of pausing upon or giving force to any one word, "if my poor father had been alive, he would have settled it all after his own way soon enough. He was a great match-maker you know, Sir Philip, and he would have proposed, in spite of all obstacles, a marriage between the two parties, to settle the affair by matrimony instead of by law," and she laughed again as if the very idea was ridiculous.

Unlearned Sir Philip thought so too, and most improperly replied, "The difference of age would of course put that out of the ques-

tion;" nor when he had committed the indiscretion, did he perceive the red spot which came upon Mrs. Hazleton's fair brow, and indicated sufficiently enough the effect his words had produced. There was an ominous silent pause, however, for a minute, and then the Baronet was the person to resume the discourse in his usual calm, argumentative tone. "I do not think," he said, "from Mr. Marlow's demeanor or conversation, that he is likely to be very exacting in this matter. His claim, however, must be looked to in the first place, before we admit any thing on your part. If the property was really entailed, he has undoubtedly a right to it, both in honesty and in law; but methinks there he might limit his claim if his sense of real equity be strong; but the entail must be made perfectly clear before you can admit so much as that."

"Well, well, sir," said Mrs. Hazleton, hastily, for she heard a step on the outer stairs, "I will leave it entirely to you, Sir Philip, I am sure you will take good care of my interests."

Sir Philip did not altogether like the word interests, and bowing his head somewhat stiffly, he added, "and of your honor, my dear madam."

Mrs. Hazleton liked his words as little as he did hers, and she colored highly. She made no reply, indeed, but his words that night were never forgotten.

The next moment Mr. Marlow entered the room with a quiet, easy air, evidently quite unconscious of having been the subject of conversation. During the evening he paid every sort of polite attention to his fair hostess, and undoubtedly showed signs and symptoms of thinking her a very beautiful and charming woman. Whatever was her game, take my word for it, reader, she played it skilfully, and the very fact of her retiring early, at the very moment when she had made the most favorable impression, leaving Sir Philip Hastings to entertain Mr. Marlow at supper, was not without its calculation.

As soon as the lady was gone, Sir Philip turned to the topic of Mrs. Hazleton's business with his young companion, and managed the matter more skilfully than might have been expected. He simply told him that Mrs. Hazleton had mentioned a claim made upon her estate by his lawyers, and had thought it better to leave the investigation of the affair to her friend, rather than to professional persons.

A frank good-humored smile came upon Mr. Marlow's face at once. "I am not a rich man, Sir Philip," he said, "and make no professions of generosity, but, at the same time, as my grand-uncle undoubtedly had this money from Mrs. Hazleton's father, I should most likely never have troubled her on the subject, but that this very estate is the original seat of our family, on which we can trace our ancestors back through many centuries. The property was undoubtedly entailed, my father and my uncle were still living when it was sold, and performed no disentailing act whatever. This

is perfectly susceptible of proof, and though my claim may put Mrs. Hazleton to some inconvenience, I am anxious to avoid putting her to any pain. Now I have come down with a proposal which I confidently trust you will think reasonable. Indeed, I expected to find her lawyer here rather than an independent friend, and I was assured that my proposal would be accepted immediately, by persons who judged of my rights more sanely perhaps than I could."

"May I hear what the proposal is?" asked Sir Philip.

"Assuredly," replied Mr. Marlow, "it is this: that in the first place Mrs. Hazleton should appoint some gentleman of honor, either at the bar or not, as she may think fit, to investigate my claim, with myself or some other gentleman on my part, with right to call in a third as umpire between them. I then propose that if my claim should be distinctly proved, Mrs. Hazleton should surrender to me the lands in question, I repaying her the sum which my grand-uncle received, and—"

"Stay," said Sir Philip Hastings, "are you aware that the law would not oblige you to do that?"

"Perfectly," replied Mr. Marlow, "and indeed I am not very sure that equity would require it either, for I do not know that my father ever received any benefit from the money paid to his uncle. He may have received a part however, without my knowing it, for I would rather err on the right side than on the wrong. I then propose that the rents of the estate, as shown by the leases, and fair interest upon the value of the ground surrounding this house, should be computed during the time that it has been out of our possession, while on the other hand the legal interest of the money paid for the property should be calculated for the same period, the smaller sum deducted from the larger, and the balance paid by me to Mrs. Hazleton or by Mrs. Hazleton to me, so as to replace every thing in the same state as if this unfortunate sale had never taken place."

Sir Philip Hastings mused without reply for more than one minute. That is a long time to muse, and many may be the thoughts and feelings which pass through the breast of man during that space. They were many in the present instance, and it would not be very easy to separate or define them. Sir Philip thought of all the law would have granted to the young claimant under the circumstances of the case: the whole property, all the back rents, every improvement that had been made, the splendid mansion in which they were then standing, without the payment on his part of a penny: he compared these legal rights with what he now proposed, and he saw that he had indeed gone a great way on the generous side of equity. There was something very fine and noble in this conduct, something that harmonized well with his own heart and feelings. There was no exaggeration, no romance about

it; he spoke in the tone of a man of business doing a right thing well considered, and the Baronet was satisfied in every respect but one. Mrs. Hazleton's words I must not say had created a suspicion, but had suggested the idea that other feelings might be acting between her and his young companion, notwithstanding the difference of age which he had so bluntly pointed out, and he resolved to inquire farther.

In the mean time, however, Mr. Marlow somewhat misinterpreted his silence, and he added, after waiting longer than was pleasant, "Of course you understand, Sir Philip, that if two or three honest men decide that my case is unfounded—although I know that cannot be the case—I agree to drop it at once and renounce it for ever. My solicitors and counsel in London judged the offer a fair one at least."

"And so do I," said Sir Philip Hastings, emphatically; "however, I must speak with Mrs. Hazleton upon the subject, and express my opinion to her. Pray, have you the papers regarding your claim with you?"

"I have attested copies," replied Mr. Marlow, "and I can bring them to you in a moment. They are so unusually clear, and seem to put the matter so completely beyond all doubt, that I brought them down to satisfy Mrs. Hazleton and her solicitor, without farther trouble, that my demand at least had some foundation in justice."

The papers were immediately brought, and sitting down deliberately, Sir Philip Hastings went through them with his young friend, carefully weighing every word. They left not even a doubt on his mind; they seemed not to leave a chance even for the chicanery of the law, they were clear, precise, and definite. And the generosity of the young man's offer stood out even more conspicuously than before.

"For my part, I am completely satisfied," said Sir Philip Hastings, when he had done the examination, and I have no doubt that Mrs. Hazleton will be so likewise. She is an excellent and amiable person, as well as a very beautiful woman. Have you known her long? have you seen her often?"

"Only once, and that about a year ago," replied Mr. Marlow; "she is indeed very beautiful as you say—for a woman of her period of life remarkably so; she puts me very much in mind of my mother, whom I in the confidence of youthful affection used to call 'my everlasting.' I recollect doing so only three days before the hand of death wrote upon her brow the vanity of all such earthly thoughts."

Sir Philip Hastings was satisfied. There was nothing like passion there. Unobservant as he was in most things, he was more clear-sighted in regard to matters of love, than any other affection of the human mind. He had himself loved deeply and intensely, and he had not forgotten it.

It was necessary, before any thing could be concluded, to wait for Mrs. Hazleton's rising on the following morning; and, bidding Mr. Marlow good night with a warm grasp of the

hand, Sir Philip Hastings retired to his room and passed nearly an hour in thought, pondering the character of his new acquaintance, recalling every trait he had remarked, and every word he had heard. It was a very satisfactory contemplation. He never remembered to have met with one who seemed so entirely a being after his own heart. There might be little flaws, little weaknesses perhaps, but the confirming power of time and experience would, he thought, strengthen all that was good, and counsel and example remedy all that was weak or light.

"At all events," thought the Baronet, "his conduct on this occasion shows a noble and equitable spirit. We shall see how Mrs. Hazleton meets it to-morrow."

When that morning came, he had to see the reverse of the picture, but it must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. HAZLETON was up in the morning early. She was at all times an early riser, for she well knew what a special conservator of beauty is the morning dew, but on this occasion certain feelings of impatience made her a little earlier than usual. Besides, she knew that Sir Philip Hastings was always a matutinal man, and would certainly be in the library before she was down. Nor was she disappointed. There she found the Baronet reaching up his hand to take down Livy, after having just replaced Tacitus.

"It is a most extraordinary thing, my dear madam," said Sir Philip, after the salutation of the morning, "and puzzles me more than I can explain."

Mrs. Hazleton fancied that her friend had discovered some very knotty point in the case with Mr. Marlow, and she rejoiced, for her object was not to emulate but to entangle. Sir Philip, however, went on to put her out of all patience by saying, "How the Romans, so sublimely virtuous at one period of their history, could fall into so debased and corrupt a state as we find described even by Sallust, and depicted in more frightful colors still by the latter historians of the empire."

Mrs. Hazleton, as I have said, was out of all patience, and ladies in that state sometimes have recourse to homely illustration. "Their virtue got addled, I suppose," she replied, "by too long keeping. Virtue is an egg that won't bear sitting upon—but now do tell me, Sir Philip, had you any conversation with Mr. Marlow last night upon this troublesome affair of mine?"

"I had, my dear madam," replied Sir Philip, with a very faint smile, for Sir Philip could not well bear any jesting on the Romans. "I did not only converse with Mr. Marlow on the subject, but I examined carefully the papers he brought down with him, and perceived at once that you have not the shadow of a title to the property in question."

Mrs. Hazleton's brow grew dark, and she

replied in a somewhat sullen tone, "You decided against me very rapidly, Sir Philip. I hope you did not let Mr. Marlow see your strong prepossession—opinion I mean to say—in his favor."

"Entirely," replied Sir Philip Hastings.

Mrs. Hazleton was silent, and gazed down upon the carpet as if she were counting the threads of which it was composed, and finding the calculation by no means satisfactory.

Sir Philip let her gaze on for some time, for he was not very easily moved to compassion in cases where he saw dishonesty of purpose as well as suffering. At length, however, he said, "My judgment is not binding upon you in the least; I tell you simply, my dear madam, what is my conclusion, and the law will tell you the same."

"We shall see," muttered Mrs. Hazleton between her teeth; but then putting on a softer air she asked, "Tell me, Sir Philip, would you, if you were in my situation, tamely give up a property which was honestly bought and paid for, without making one struggle to retain it?"

"The moment I was convinced I had no legal right to it," replied Sir Philip. "However, the law is still open to you, if you think it better to resist; but before you take your determination, you had better hear what Mr. Marlow proposes, and you will pardon me for expressing to you what I did not express to him: an opinion that his proposal is founded upon the noblest view of equity."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Hazleton, with her eyes brightening, "pray let me hear this proposal."

Sir Philip explained it to her most distinctly, expecting that she would be both surprised and pleased, and never doubted that she would accept it instantly. Whether she was surprised or not, did not appear, but pleased she certainly was not to any great extent, for she did not wish the matter to be so soon concluded. She began to make objections immediately. "The enormous expense of building this house has not been taken into consideration at all, and it will be very necessary to have the original papers examined before any thing is decided. There are two sides to every question, my dear Sir Philip, and we cannot tell that other papers may not be found, disentailing this estate before the sale took place."

"This is impossible," answered Sir Philip Hastings, "if the papers exhibited to me are genuine, for this young gentleman, on whom, as his father's eldest son, the estate devolved by the entail, was not born when the sale took place. By his act only could it be disentailed, and as he was not born, he could perform no such act."

He pressed her hard in his cold way, and it galled her sorely.

"Perhaps they are not genuine," she said at length.

"They are all attested," replied Sir Philip, "and he himself proposes that the originals should be examined as the basis of the whole transaction."

"That is absolutely necessary," said Mrs. Hazleton, well satisfied to put off decision even for a time. But Sir Philip would not leave her even that advantage.

"I think," he said, "you must at once decide whether you accept his proposal, on condition that the examination of the papers proves the justice of his claim to the satisfaction of those you may appoint to examine it. If there are any doubts and difficulties to be raised afterwards, he might as well proceed by law at once."

"Then let him go to law," exclaimed Mrs. Hazleton with a flashing eye. "If he do, I will defend every step to the utmost of my power."

"Incur enormous expense, give yourself infinite pain and mortification, and ruin a fine estate by a spirit of unnecessary and unjust resistance," added Sir Philip, in a calm and somewhat contemptuous tone.

"Really, Sir Philip, you press me too hard," exclaimed Mrs. Hazleton in a tone of angry mortification, and, sitting down to the table, she actually wept.

"I only press you for your own good," answered the Baronet, not at all moved, "you are perhaps not aware that if this gentleman's claim is just, and you resist it, the whole costs will fall upon you. All that could be expected of him was to submit his claim to arbitration, but he now does more; he proposes, if arbitration pronounce it just, to make sacrifices of his legal rights to the amount of many thousand pounds. He is not bound to refund one penny paid for this estate, he is entitled to back rents for a considerable number of years, and yet he offers to repay the money, and far from demanding the back rents, to make compensation for any loss of interest that may have been sustained by this investment. There are few men in England, let me tell you, who would have made such a proposal, and if you refuse it you will never have such another."

"Do not you think, Sir Philip," asked Mrs. Hazleton sharply, "that he never would have made such a proposal if he had not known there was something wrong about his title?"

Now there was something in this question which doubly provoked Sir Philip Hastings. He never could endure a habit which some ladies have of recurring continually to points previously disposed of, and covering the reiteration by merely putting objections in a new form. Now the question as to the validity of Mr. Marlow's title, he looked upon as entirely disposed of by the proposal of investigation and arbitration. But there was something more than this; the very question which the lady put showed an incapacity for conceiving any generous motive, which thoroughly disgusted him, and, turning with a quiet step to the window, he looked down upon the lawn which spread far away between two ranges of tall fine wood, glowing in the yellow sunshine of a dewy autumnal morning. It was the most favorable thing he could have done for Mrs. Hazleton. Even the finest and the strongest

and the stoutest minds are more frequently affected unconsciously by external things than any one is aware of. The sweet influences or the irritating effects of fine or bad weather, of beautiful or tame scenery, of small cares and petty disappointments, of pleasant associations or unpleasant memories, nay of a thousand accidental circumstances, and even fancies themselves, will affect considerations totally distinct and apart, as the blue or yellow panes of a stained glass window cast a melancholy hue or a yellow splendor upon the statue and carvings of the cold gray stone.

As Sir Philip gazed forth upon the fair scene before his eyes, and thought what a lovely spot it was, how calm, how peaceful, how refreshing in its influence, he said to himself, "No wonder she is unwilling to part with it."

Then again, there was a hare gambolling upon the lawn, at a distance of about a hundred yards from the house, now scampering along and beating up the dew from the morning grass, now crouched nearly flat so as hardly to be seen among the tall green blades, then hopping quietly along with an awkward, shuffling gait, or sitting up on its hind legs, with raised ears, listening to some distant sound; but still as it resumed its gambols, again going round and round, tracing upon the green sward a labyrinth of meandering lines. Sir Philip watched it for several moments with a faint smile, and then said to himself, "It is the beast's nature—why not a woman's?"

Turning himself round he saw Mrs. Hazleton, sitting at the table with her head leaning in a melancholy attitude upon her hand, and he replied to her last words, though he had before fully made up his mind to give them no answer whatever.

"The question in regard to title, my dear madam," he said, "is one which is to be decided by others. Employ a competent person, and he will insure, by full investigation, that your rights are maintained entire. Your acceptance of Mr. Marlow's proposals contingent on the full recognition of his claim, will be far from prejudicing your case, should any flaw in your title be discovered. On the contrary, should the decision of a point of law be required, it will put you well with the court. By frankly doing so, you also meet him in the same spirit in which I am sure he comes to you; and as I am certain he has a very high sense of equity, I think he will be well inclined to enter into any arrangement which may be for your convenience. From what he has said himself, I do not believe he can afford to keep such an establishment as is necessary for this house, and if you cling to it, as you may well do, doubtless it may remain your habitation as long as you please at a very moderate rent. Every other particular I think may be settled in the same manner, if you will but show a spirit of conciliation, and——"

"I am sure I have done that," said Mrs. Hazleton, interrupting him. "However, Sir Philip, I will leave it all to you. You must act for

me in this business. If you think it right, I will accept the proposal conditionally as you mention, and the title can be examined fully whenever we can fix upon the time and the person. All this is very hard upon me, I do think; but I suppose I must submit with a good grace."

"It is certainly the best plan," replied Sir Philip; and while Mrs. Hazleton retired to efface the traces of tears from her eyelids, the Baronet walked into the drawing-room, where he was soon after joined by Mr. Marlow. He merely told him, however, that he had conversed with the lady of the house, and that she would give him her answer in person. Now, whatever were Mrs. Hazleton's wishes or intentions, she certainly was not well satisfied with the precise and rapid manner in which Sir Philip brought matters of business to an end. His last words, however, had afforded her a glimmering prospect of somewhat lengthy and frequent communication between herself and Mr. Marlow, and one thing is certain, that she did not at all desire the transaction between them to be concluded too briefly. At the same time, it was not her object to appear otherwise than in the most favorable light to his eyes; and consequently, when she entered the drawing-room she held out her hand to him with a gracious though somewhat melancholy smile, saying, "I have had a long conversation with Sir Philip this morning, Mr. Marlow, concerning the very painful business which brought you here. I agree at once to your proposal in regard to the arbitration and the rest;" and she then went on to speak of the whole business as if she had made not the slightest resistance whatever, but had been struck at once by the liberality of his proposals, and by the sense of equity which they displayed. Sir Philip took little notice of all this; for he had fallen into one of his fits of musing, and Mr. Marlow had quitted the room to bring some of the papers for the purpose of showing them to Mrs. Hazleton, before the Baronet awoke out of his reverie. The younger gentleman returned a moment after, and he and Sir Philip and Mrs. Hazleton were busily looking at a long list of certificates of births, deaths and marriages, when the door opened, and Mr. Shanks, the attorney, entered the room, booted, spurred, and dusty as if from a long ride. He was a man to whom Sir Philip had a great objection; but he said nothing, and the attorney with a tripping step advanced towards Mrs. Hazleton.

The lady looked confused and annoyed, and in a hasty manner put back the papers into Mr. Marlow's hand. But Mr. Shanks was one of the keen and observing men of the world. He saw every thing about him as if he had been one of those insects which have I do not know how many thousand pair of lenses in each eye. He had no scruples or hesitation either; he was all sight and all remark, and a lady of any kind was not at all the person to inspire him with reverence.

He was, in short, all law and loved nothing, respected nothing, but law.

"Dear me, Mrs. Hazleton," he exclaimed, "I did not expect to find you so engaged. These seem to be law papers—very dangerous, indeed, madam, for unprofessional persons to meddle with such things. Permit me to look at them;" and he held out his hand towards Mr. Marlow, as if expecting to receive the papers without a word of remonstrance. But Mr. Marlow held them back, saying, in a very calm, civil tone, "Excuse me, sir! We are conversing over the matter in a friendly manner; and I shall show them to a lawyer only at Mrs. Hazleton's request."

"Very improper—that is, I mean to say very unprofessional!" exclaimed Mr. Shanks, "and let me say very hazardous too," rejoined the lawyer abruptly; but Mrs. Hazleton herself interposed, saying in a marked tone and with an air of dignity which did not always characterize her demeanor towards her "right hand man," as she was accustomed sometimes to designate Mr. Shanks, "We do not desire any interference at this moment, my good sir. I appointed you at twelve o'clock. It is not yet nine." "O I can see, I can see," replied Mr. Shanks, while Sir Philip Hastings advanced a step or two, "his worship here never was a friend of mine, and has no objection to take a job or two out of my hands at any time."

"We have nothing to do with jobs, sir," said Sir Philip Hastings, in his usual dry tone, "but at all events we do not wish you to make a job where there is none."

"I must take the liberty, however, of warning that lady, sir," said Mr. Shanks, with the pertinacity of a parrot, which he so greatly resembled, "as her legal adviser, sir, that if——"

"That if she sends for an attorney, she wants him at the time she appoints," interposed Sir Philip; "that was what you were about to say, I suppose."

"Not at all, sir, not at all," exclaimed the lawyer; for very shrewd and very oily lawyers will occasionally forget their caution and their coolness when they see the prospect of a loss of fees before them. "I was going to say no such thing. I was going to warn her not to meddle with matters of business of which she can understand nothing, by the advice of those who know less, and who may have jobs of their own to settle while they are meddling with hers." "And I warn you to quit this room, sir," said Sir Philip Hastings, a bright spot coming into his usually pale cheek; "the lady has already expressed her opinion upon your intrusion, and depend upon it, I will enforce mine."

"I shall do no such thing, sir, till I have fully——"

He said no more, for before he could conclude the sentence, the hand of Sir Philip Hastings was upon his collar with the grasp of a giant, and although he was a tall and somewhat powerful man, the Baronet dragged him to the door

in despite of his half-choking struggles, as a nurse would haul along a baby, pulled him across the stone hall, and opening the outer door with his left hand, shot him down the steps without any ceremony; leaving him with his hands and knees upon the terrace.

This done, the Baronet returned into the house again, closing the door behind him. He then paused in the hall for an instant, reproaching himself for certain over-quick beatings of the heart, tranquilized his whole look and demeanor, and then returning to the drawing-room, resumed the conversation with Mrs. Hazleton, as if nothing had ever occurred to interrupt it.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. HAZLETON was so affected to be a good deal flustered by the event which had just taken place, but after a number of certain graceful attitudes, assumed without the slightest appearance of affectation, she recovered her calmness, and proceeded with the business in hand. That business was soon terminated, so far as the full and entire acceptance of Mr. Marlow's proposal went, and immediately after the conclusion of breakfast, Sir Philip Hastings ordered his horses to depart. Mrs. Hazleton fain would have detained him, for she foresaw that his going might be a signal for Mr. Marlow's going also, and it was not a part of her policy to assume the matronly character so distinctly as to invite him to remain in her house alone. Sir Philip however was inexorable, and returned to his own dwelling, renewing his invitation to his new acquaintance.

Mrs. Hazleton bade him adieu, with the greatest appearance of cordiality; but I am very much afraid, if one had possessed the power of looking into her heart, one would have a picture very different from that presented by her face. Sir Philip Hastings had said and done things since he had entered her dwelling the night before, which Mrs. Hazleton was not a woman to forget or forgive. He had thwarted her schemes, he had mortified her vanity, he had wounded her pride; and she was one of those women who bide their time, but have a strong tenacity of resentments.

When he was gone, however, she played a new game with Mr. Marlow. She insisted upon his remaining for the day, but with a fine sense of external proprieties, she informed him that she expected a charming elderly lady of her acquaintance to pass a few days with her, to whom she should particularly like to introduce him.

This was false, be it remarked; but she immediately took measures to make it true. Now, there is in every neighborhood more than one of that class called good creatures. For this office, an abundant store of real or assumed soft stupidity is required; but it is a somewhat difficult part to play, for with this stupidity there must also be a considerable portion of fine tact, to guard the performer against any of those blunders into which good-

natural people are continually plunging. Drill and discipline are also necessary, in order to be always on the look out for hints, to appreciate them properly, to comprehend that friends may say one thing and mean another, and to ask no questions of any kind. There were no less than three of these good creatures in this Mrs. Hazleton's immediate neighborhood; and during a few moments' retreat to her own little writing-room, she laid her finger upon her fair temple, and thought them well over. Mrs. Winifred Edgeby was the first who suggested herself to the mind of the fair lady. She had many of the requisites. She dressed well, talked well, and had an air of style and fashion about her; was perfectly innocuous, and skilful in divining the purposes and wishes of a friend or patron; but there was an occasional touch of subacid humor about her which Mrs. Hazleton did not half like. It gave an impression of seeing too clearly, of perceiving much more than she pretended to perceive.

The second was Mrs. Warmington, a widow, not very rich, and not indeed very refined; gay, talkative, somewhat boisterous, yet full of a sound discretion in never committing herself or a friend. She had also much experience, for she had been twice married, and twice a widow, and thus had had her misfortunes. The third was a Miss Goodenough, the most silent, quiet, stilly person in the world, moving about the house with the step of a cat, and a face of infinite good nature to the whole human race. She was to all appearance the pink of gentleness and weak good nature; but her silence was invaluable.

After some consideration Mrs. Hazleton decided upon the widow, and instantly dispatched a note with her own carriage, begging Mrs. Warmington to come over immediately and spend a few days with her, as a young gentleman had arrived upon a visit, and it would be indecorous to entertain him alone.

Mrs. Warmington understood it all in an instant. She said to herself, "Ho, ho! a young gentleman come to stay!—wanted a duenna! Matrimony in the wind! Heigho! she must be six and thirty—six and thirty from two and fifty leave sixteen points against me, and long odds. Well, well,—I have had my share;" and Mrs. Warmington laughed aloud. However, she would neither keep Mrs. Hazleton's carriage waiting, nor Mrs. Hazleton herself in suspense, for there were various little comforts and conveniences in the good will of that lady which Mrs. Warmington was eager to cultivate. She had, too, a shrewd suspicion that the enmity of Mrs. Hazleton might become a thing to be seriously dreaded; and therefore, whichever side of the question she looked at, she saw reasons for seeking the beautiful widow's good graces. Her maid was called, her clothes packed up, and she entered the carriage and drove away, while in the mean time Mrs. Hazleton had been expatiating to Mr. Marlow upon all the high qualities

and points of excellence in her friend Mrs. Warmington. She was too skilful, moreover, to bring her good taste and judgment into question with her young friend, by raising expectations which might be disappointed. She therefore threw in insinuations of a few faults and failings in dear Madam Warmington's manner and demeanor. But then she said she was such a good creature at heart, that although the very fastidious affected to censure, she herself forgot all little blemishes in the inherent excellence of the person.

Moreover, upon the plea of looking at the ground which was the subject of Mr. Marlow's claim, she led him out for a long, pleasant ramble through the park. She took him amongst old hawthorn trees, through groves of chestnuts by the banks of the stream, and along paths where the warm sunshine played through the brown and yellow leaves above, gilding their companions which had fallen earlier than themselves to the sward below. It was a very lover-like walk indeed—one where nature speaks to the heart, wakening sweet influences, and charming the spirit up from hard and cold indifference. Mrs. Hazleton felt sure that Mr. Marlow would not forget that walk, and she took care to impress it as deeply as possible upon his memory. Nor did she want any of the means to do so. Her mind was highly cultivated for the age in which she lived, her taste fine, her information extensive. She could discourse of foreign lands, of objects and scenes of deep interest, great beauty, and rich associations,—of courts and cities far away, of music, painting, flowers in other lands, of climates rich in sunshine and of genial warmth; and through the whole she had the art to throw a sort of magic glow from her own mind which brightened all she spoke of.

She was very charming that day, indeed, and Mr. Marlow felt the spell, but he did not fall in love.

Now what was the object of using all these powers upon him? Was Mrs. Hazleton a person very susceptible, or very covetous of the tender passion? Since her return to England she had refused some half-dozen very eligible offers from handsome, agreeable, estimable men, and the world in general had set her down for a person as cold as a stone. It might be so, but there are some stones which, when you heat them, acquire intense fervor, and retain it longer than any other substance. Every body in the world has his peculiarities, his whims, caprices, crochets if you will. Mrs. Hazleton had gazed over the handsome, the glittering and the gay, with the most perfect indifference. She had listened to professions of love with a tranquil, easy balance power, which weighed to a grain the advantages of matrimony and widowhood, without suffering the dust of passion to give even a shake to the scale. Before the preceding night she had only seen Mr. Marlow once, but the moment she set eyes upon him—the moment she heard

his voice, she had said to herself, "If ever I marry again, that is the man." There is no explaining these sympathetic attractions, impulses, or whatever they may be called; but I think, from some observation of human nature, it will be found that in those persons where they are the least frequent, they are the most powerful and persevering when they do exist.

Not long after their first meeting, some intimation occurred of a claim on the part of Mr. Marlow to a portion of the lady's property—that portion that she loved best. The very idea of parting with it at all, of being forced to give it up, was most painful and distressing to her. Yet that made no difference whatever in her feelings towards Mr. Marlow. Communications of various kinds took place between lawyers, and the opposite counsel were as firm as a rock. Mrs. Hazleton thought it very hard, very unjust, very wrong; but that changed not in the least her feelings towards Mr. Marlow. Nay more, with that delicate art of combination in which ladies are formed to excel, she conceived and manipulated with great dexterity a scheme for bringing herself and Mr. Marlow into frequent personal communication, and for causing somebody to suggest to him a marriage with her own beautiful self, as the best mode of settling the disputed claim.

O those fine and delicate threads of intrigue, how frail they are, and how much depends upon every one of them, be it in the warp or the woof of a scheme! We have seen that in this case, one of them gave way under the rough handling of Sir Philip Hastings, and the whole fabric was in imminent danger of running down and becoming nothing but a raveled skein. Mrs. Hazleton was resolved that it should not be so, and now she was busily engaged in the attempt to knot together the broken thread, and to lay all the others straight and in right order again. This was the secret of the whole matter.

She exerted all her charms, and could Weller but have seen her we should have had such an account of the artillery of her eyes, the insidious attack of her smile, and the whole host of powerful adversaries brought to bear against the object of her assault in her gracefully moving form and heaving bosom, that Saccharissa would have melted away like a wet lump of sugar in the comparison.

Then again when she had produced an effect, and saw clear and distinctly that he thought her lovely, and very charming too, she seemed to fall into a pleasant sort of languid melancholy, which was even more charming still. The brook was bubbling and murmuring at their feet, dashing clear and bright over its stony bed, and changing the brown rock, the water weed, or the leaf beneath, into gems by the magic of its own brightness. The boughs were waving over head, covered with many-colored foliage, and the sun, glancing through, not only enriched the tints above, but checkered the mossy path along which they

wandered like a chess-board of brown and gold. Some of the late autumn birds uttered their short sweet songs from the copse hard by, and the musical wind came sighing up from the valley, as if nature had furnished Eolus with a harp. It was in short quite a scene, and a moment for a widow to make love to a young man. They were silent for some little time, and then Mrs. Hazleton said, with her soft, sweet, round voice, "Is not all this very charming, Mr. Marlow?"

Her tone was quite a sad one, but not with that sort of pleasant sadness which often mingles with our happiest moments, giving them even a higher zest, like the flattened notes when a fine piece of music passes gently from the major into the minor key, but really sad, profoundly sad.

"Very charming, indeed," replied her young companion, looking round to her face with some surprise.

"And what am I to do without it, when you turn me out of my house?" said the lady, answering his glance with a melancholy smile.

"Turn you out of your house!" exclaimed Mr. Marlow; "I hope you do not suppose, my dear madam, that I could dream of such a thing. Oh, no! I would not for the world deprive such a scene of its brightest ornament. Some arrangement can be easily effected, even if my claim should prove satisfactory to those you appoint to investigate it, by which the neighborhood will not be deprived of the happiness of your presence."

Mrs. Hazleton felt that she had made a great step, and as she well knew that there was no chance of his proposing then and there, she resolved not to risk losing ground by any farther advance, even while she secured some present benefits from that which was gained. "Well, well," she said, "Mr. Marlow, I am quite sure you are very kind and very generous, and we can talk of that matter hereafter. Only there is one thing you must promise me, which is, that in regard to any arrangements respecting the house you will not leave them to be settled by cold lawyers or colder friends, who cannot enter into my feelings in regard to this place, or your own liberal and kindly feelings either. Let us settle it some day between ourselves," she added, with a light laugh, "in a tête-à-tête like this. I do not suppose you are afraid of being overreached by me in a bargain. But now let us turn our steps back towards the house, for I expect Mrs. Warmington early, and I must not be absent when she arrives."

Mrs. Warmington was there already; for the tête-à-tête had lasted longer than Mrs. Hazleton knew. However, Mrs. Hazleton's first task was to inform her fair friend and counsellor of the cause of Mr. Marlow's being there; her next to tell her that all had been settled as to the claim, by that tiresome man Sir Philip Hastings, without what she considered due deliberation, and that the only thing which remained to be arranged was in regard

to the house, respecting which Mrs. Hazleton communicated a certain portion of her own inclinations, and of Mr. Marlow's kind view of the matter.

Now, strange to say, this was the turning point of fate for Mrs. Hazleton, Mr. Marlow, and most of the persons mentioned in this history. It was then that Mrs. Warmington suggested a scheme which she thought would suit her friend well.

"Why do you not offer him in exchange—for the time at all events—your fine old house on the side of Hartwell—Hartwell Place? It is only seven miles off. It is ready furnished to his hand, and must be worth a great deal more than the bare walls of this. Besides it would be pleasant to have him in the neighborhood."

Pause, Mrs. Hazleton! pause and meditate over all the consequences; for be assured much depends upon these few simple words.

Mrs. Hazleton did pause—Mrs. Hazleton did meditate. She ran over in her head the list of all the families in the neighborhood. In none of them could she see a probable rival. There were plenty of married women, old maids, young girls; but she saw nobody to fear, and with a proud consciousness of her own beauty and worth, she took her resolution. That very evening she proposed to Mr. Marlow what her friend had suggested. It was accepted.

Mrs. Hazleton had made one miscalculation, and her fate and Mr. Marlow's were decided.

A STRUGGLE.

IN FOUR PARTS.--PART I.

SKIRMISH.

(From *Mademoiselle Pauline Delange to Madame de Montfriand.*)

CHATEAU ST.-ELOI, VOSGES, July, 1870.

WHENEVER I see you, dearest Clémence, you shall receive a thousand kisses. The packages came yesterday. What you have sent me is superb, and selected with that delicate appreciation of shade and color which only a Parisienne as you are has at her fingers' ends. Now, quite naturally—for Madame la Comtesse de Montfriand cannot differ so much from my own Clémence du Parc—that little vein of curiosity must still exist, and the question will have arisen in her mind, "What does that plain and quiet Pauline want with this accumulation of finery?" The texture of the *drap d'été* is fairy-like, and the *nuance* charming. The riding-habit is simply *adorable*, and fits me divinely; and the hat—oh! the dear hat! Without my horse, for it rained in torrents yesterday, and it is too muddy for me to venture out to-day, yesterday I put on the whole costume, gathered up the trailing skirt, and, whip in hand, went galloping up and down one of our long corridors.

Now learn, madame, that we are to have no end of guests at the château. That is your answer. Notwithstanding all the clouds which disturb the political horizon, and those rumors of war, which papa thinks are so absurd, an unusual number of people have been invited. Papa's oldest friend, and my godfather, Général de Frail, we expect to-day. The general has been stationed in the neighboring department for the last three weeks. It is intimated that the general is coming to St.-Eloi on a special tour of inspection, for he has attached to him, as his military family, a whole *état-major*—in fact, some dozen officers at the very least. Of course, this cavalcade will not live in the house, but will be quartered in the town. But these gentlemen will be sure to be at the château most of the time, as papa has given the general the library, and all the rooms in the wing adjoining it. Undoubtedly our poor château of St.-Eloi will be resplendent with epaulets, and spurs will be ringing on the stairs, and swords will be found littering the *fauteuils*. Papa is in grand spirits, as he has an immense contract for all kinds of iron from the government.

Madame de Valbois, an old friend of my poor mother, who says she nursed me when I was born, when my poor mother died, arrived here a week ago. M. Raoul de Valbois, her cherished son, accompanied her. M. de Valbois you know about already, at least by hearsay. I may have spoken to you about him. M. de Valbois has just returned from the East, where he was an *attaché* to the Persian legation. The gentleman is not, however, the least bit Oriental. He

assured me that in Ispahan he lived precisely as he would have done in Paris, and that he had trained a Persian to become a perfect *concierge*. There could have been no difference, I suppose, for M. de Valbois, save that he did not have his morning papers, his club, and his airing at the Bois. M. de Valbois has brought with him a superb Persian hound. He is handsome and tyrannical (the dog, I mean), for this morning the big brute flew at Bobe, a little terrier of mine, and wanted to eat him up. But Bobe is bravery itself, and would rather have died than have run away.

I do not know whether I have spelled my funny little dog's name rightly. I half suspect it should be Bobb. Whether this stands for an abbreviation of the English Robert, or is a common term for an animal with a very short tail, I do not know, for both explanations have been given me. Bobe, then, who is crouching at my feet, will serve to introduce somebody else, not exactly one of our guests, but rather a member of papa's working family, for papa has some six hundred and odd men at the forge. This person is an invalid, and on the sick-list. You know how original papa is, so when he insisted on bringing into the house one of his *contre-maîtres*,¹ of course I had nothing to say. You have heard how papa was once a poor graduate at the Ecole des Mines, and went to the United States in search of his fortune. Papa would have died there of fever had it not been for some American acquaintances, who nursed him, and sent him home to France. When papa came to Alsace he started a modest foundry, which has grown and grown, until to-day behold me the daughter of the largest iron-manufacturer in the Vosges, and papa a deputy! Well, there is a kind of lingering tenderness which papa indulges in toward Americans, who are not to me the most prepossessing people in the world. Do you remember that hateful Miss Smeef, of New York, who was at school with us; how she lorded it over all the poor *pen-sionnaires*; how she browbeat our lady principal, and knew more about Paris at sixteen than we ever shall, I trust, in all our lives?

The way this person came into papa's favor was as follows: About a year ago there was some huge piece of machinery to be moved from our *usine* to a paper-mill some fifteen leagues distant, over a route which went directly across the railroad. This monstrous apparatus, weighing I do not know how much, was placed on one of the strongest wagons, pulled by twelve horses, when the wagon broke, and down fell the whole mass of iron, right across the railroad track. Of course there was no danger to the coming train, for the railroad people could have telegraphed the mishap, only papa would have been forced to pay heavy damages for even an accidental

¹ Foreman, or overseer.

obstruction of the road. Papa happened to see the break-down from one of the windows of his office, and he raged and stormed as only my dear papa can rage and storm. A host of men were called, who all pulled, and tugged, and strained, and the thing would not budge. You know, my dear Clémence, how we French are given to expletives. *Va!* If bad language could have moved that heavy mass of iron, it would have flown. I happened to be riding that way with my groom, and was attracted by the confusion. There was poor papa, in almost a fit of apoplexy, watch in hand, saying that the machine must be off the track in fifteen minutes, or it would be a loss of ten thousand francs to him, because the express-train to Paris would be due in twenty minutes. Papa ordered out more men, and the heaviest tackle. You see, Clémence, I know all about such things.

"It can be done more quickly, and without so much trouble," said a little man, in rather grammatical French, but with a decided English accent. "If you will only keep quiet, and not all talk at once, I feel pretty certain that we can clear the rails of the obstruction in fifteen minutes. Give me, sir"—this was addressed to papa—"twenty-five men—silent ones, above all—and let every one of them have hammers and chisels, and as many levers;" and the little man took a cigar out, and lit it quite composedly.

"How? how?" shrieked papa.

By this time I was so excited myself that I had urged my horse quite into the middle of the crowd of workmen.

"Do you not see that some of the heavy stays and bolts supporting the machine are all bent up, and twisted around the iron rails of the track, and that by the force of the fall they are completely imbedded? You are trying to move not only the machine, but the railroad together, which is impossible. Here, loosen that rail—pull it up—and the cross-piece too, if necessary;" and, saying this, the man, having thrown away his cigar, set alone at work one-handed, for he had but a single arm.

"What! Is it possible?" cried papa. "You want to move the rails? This is an audacious idea, and the consequences would be dreadful! I must have permission from the head engineer of the road before I can touch a single rail."

But, before papa could say anything more, the workmen seemed to have caught the little man's ideas, for they had pulled up two rails, and the hammers and chisels rained down blows on the jagged and twisted bits of irons. Pretty soon all hinderances were cut loose, and, with a hearty push, by means of rollers, the whole mass of iron was moved off the track. Then, quick as lightning, our little man, for he is scarcely three inches taller than I am, was down on his knees, tugging at the rails, and showing the workmen how to lay them in place again.

By this time a host of railroad employés were on the spot, for it happened three miles above the depot; and while they gaped in amazement over the sacrilege of those divine rights which railroads enjoy

in France, down came thundering along the *grande vitesse* train, and passed on just as smoothly as if nothing had happened. Of course, after the thing was all done and past, papa had to ask permission for form's sake to remove the rails and replace them again, all of which concessions were kindly granted him. I feel sure our little American—for he was an American—came in for a good deal of praise. Anyhow, papa, who is quick to appreciate merit, and likes to have people in his employ who can bring in prominence those peculiar qualities which sudden emergencies call for, inquired what might be the profession of this person. Our little man proved to be an engineer, and papa engaged him as a superintendent of some of our minor departments. Now, papa has a very excited way of talking about the products of his forge. You might tell him that his pictures were poor copies, or his horses or his dogs bad, or the lawn of St.-Eloi a shabby grass-plot, and he would only shrug his shoulders; but find fault with a single scrap of his iron, and he becomes furious—because he is very conscientious about such things. Now, when the new *contre-maitre* was in position for a month only, papa got into a desperate rage with him. The *contre-maitre* had declared that a certain quality of iron our forge turned out was poor, and not as good as it should be for the price. But papa listened to the new man, and, according to his suggestions, some original appliances were made, and ever since then papa has done nothing else but boast about his iron. It seems that, by the adoption of certain American devices, we not only save fuel, but make tougher iron—an improvement in quality with a diminution of cost. You may not know, my dear Clémence, how this works both ways to our profit, or how the fraction of a centime in our favor makes the difference of a fortune to us when you consider the millions of pounds of iron the forges of St.-Eloi turn out. I would not be the fitting daughter of the largest iron-manufacturer in this part of France if I did not know all the secrets of the business, for papa treats me almost like a partner, and even consults me in regard to his plans.

There, that is enough about the *contre-maitre*. Oh, I forgot—he is an invalid! It is not a very serious matter. There is nothing heroic about him. He did not wade through molten iron to save anything or anybody. Ten days ago some new process was going on of his planning, which came suddenly to a standstill, because a blowing-machine would not keep up its blast in the furnace. I don't know what it was exactly, but something had been clogged up or had stuck fast, and the hands were swearing and suggesting and doing nothing, when the *contre-maitre* did something which set all the machinery going again with such a sudden jar and clatter, that an old piece of lumber was thrown down, which struck the superintendent on the head and stunned him for the moment. Such a precious hard head he must have, not to have been killed, and to have come off with only a scalp-wound! Papa has had the *contre-maitre* at the château for a week, and he goes mooning around the grounds, with his head

bound up, looking like a small edition of Dore's Don Quixote! Oh, how did Bobe come into my possession? Bobe belonged to the *contre-maitre*, and, when the dog left his master one day and came to me, I admired the little brute. Papa asked M. Percival to send to England for just such a dog for me. M. Percival (such an odd Christian-name as he has, Hoo; it is spelled H-u-g-h—what an impossible language is English!) begged papa to keep the dog. Bobe only owes me half-allegiance: for he is constantly playing me false, and running off to his old master. Sometimes I have a mind to send him back.—There, I must cease now, for Madame de Valbois has come in. It is fortunate she has, otherwise I should be as interminable as Mées Clarissa Harlowe, who must have spent all her miserable life writing letters.

There, Madame de Valbois has gone. She asked me to whom I had been writing, and I replied, "To Clémence de Montfriand." She said, quite condescendingly: "What, Clémence du Parc, who was married some six months ago? A good acquaintance, my dear Pauline. If your friend Clémence has the beauty, the grace, the amiability, of her mother, you could have no better friend." You see, then, Clémence *chérie*, Madame de Valbois patronizes you, and congratulates me on having such distinguished acquaintances! Madame de Valbois told me that the general has just arrived, and she left me to meet him. I thought I heard a bustle in the courtyard.—Bless me! I have been looking out of the window! There is a sentinel at the entrance-door, and I see some dozen infantry-soldiers. As I supposed, St.-Eloi will be headquarters. I must go down and welcome my dear godfather—my second father, in fact. Who would think, Clémence, that such a sweet old gentleman, who looks for all the world—save his mustache—like our ancient Professor of Botany, was a redoubtable soldier, and that, in the Crimea, he was among the first to storm the Malakoff? Huzza for the glories of France! The general will kiss me, and will be sure to call me his "pretty little Pauline," as if I were a baby yet. Then he will give me an elegant *bonbonnière* full of the choicest sugar-plums. Now I might be half inclined to laugh at my dear old general's gift to a young woman of almost twenty-one, if I was not sure to find in the box a dainty ring or a bracelet. The general forgets that I am growing older, while he—why, really he remains ever the same.—I will give you a breathing-spell, Clémence, while I dress. Babette has come in to aid me in my toilet. I shall resume this interminable letter later.

Just as I told you, Clémence, the most charming of Boissiers boxes was mine, but in it was a ring, an antique—Greek or Phœnician, I don't remember which. The general, who is a famous antiquarian, picked it up himself in some ruin, in Africa, I believe—I think near old Carthage—and he has had the stone mounted by Castellani. Dear old gentleman! when I thanked him for it—for, much to Madame de Valbois's horror, I had turned out all the su-

gar-plums to look for it—the general said to me: "My dear child, some of these fine days, before very long, I hope to present you, above-board, and not in a tawdry box of comfits, such a *parure* as will tend to render my godchild more beautiful when she makes another man happy as his wife." Of course, this remark of my godfather's confused me, and the more so since I became certain that a look of intelligence had passed between Madame de Valbois and Général de Frail. Had these two good people been talking about an intended *parti* for me? I hinted before this to you, Clémence, some suspicions of such a thing. In fact, it is zetting to be such a serious matter that I ought not to treat it any longer *en espègle*. M. de Valbois and I, save for the last four years, when he was absent in America and in the East, have known each other ever since we were children. It is only within the last few years that I have ceased calling him Raoul. I know papa owes a debt of gratitude to M. Raoul's father, who in some way laid the foundation of our fortune. The De Valbois people are all very wealthy. As to M. Raoul, there is really very little to find fault with. He is highly educated, stands well in the Foreign Office, and will rise in position. At twenty-six he has some three decorations, which, with exceeding good taste, he never alludes to. He is a singularly handsome man, and, if but slightly *fat*, is but very little *fade*. But—but why has he been away for the last four years? What I feel is so difficult for me to express about him is this: I am certain that Raoul de Valbois thinks the matter of our espousals (I write you this as if I were the heroine-princess of a melodrama) is a foregone conclusion. I always imagine that there is a little lordly way about him which galls and irritates me. It is, I feel certain, Madame de Valbois who is most at fault. I try not to resent Madame's manners by supposing that her son has any such ideas, but for the life of me I cannot help it. It is true the De Valbois family can hold their heads high in point of birth, but what is that to me? Yet Madame de Valbois is constantly bringing into prominence the attentions of Madame la Comtesse This and Madame la Baronne That, who all had superb daughters, with handsome dowers, which good mammas would only have been too glad to confide their darlings to the representative of the De Valbois. I should not mind that so much, for it might be true, only she tells me, pretty much in these words, what she has replied to these eligible offers: "Mesdames, your daughters are surpassingly lovely, and their worldly conditions are no doubt assured, and your proposals generally and collectively do us honor, only we are engaged; the matter is all cut and dried. We have only to put out our hand somewhere—hardly to ask, in fact—only to intimate it, and we can be supremely happy." All these things passed through my mind then, as they do now, when the general spoke to me. Presently Madame de Valbois left us. I never saw my dear godfather in such high spirits. I have described him to you as looking like a quiet professor of sciences, only at times his eyes flash like lightning, and you can see that the man is made of iron

and steel. We had been talking some half-hour on indifferent topics, when the general referred incidentally to my geographical studies about France, for, you know, if I am slightly ignorant about the outside world, I am thoroughly at home in my own country. As to our department and the immediate neighborhood for ten leagues around, I do not think there is a road or a by-path I have not galloped over. The general put to me quite a series of singular questions as to the width of certain roads and the character of the bridges, and we had a dispute in regard to the number of arches which spanned a stream some four leagues from here. The general requested me to find for him a book on engineering devoted to the departmental improvements, in order to assure himself that I was right. I soon gave him the book, and he found that I was correct. There were some maps in the back of the volume, and he spread out one of the department on the table. As he did so a bit of tracing-paper dropped out and fell on the floor. The general picked it up, examined it, and then put the paper in his pocket. Then he went on questioning me, though his queries were put to me *en badinage*, as, "My little pupil, if it is two leagues from the cross-road where the beet-factory is to the village, and three more to the river, with a road only ten metres wide, when you cantered along it with a hunting-party, as you say you have done, pray can you tell me how many ladies and gentlemen rode abreast? Do not forget that the road narrows for the last half-league between the hills. Now count it out on your pretty fingers." Of course, my explanations were none of the clearest, so I referred him laughingly to his staff. Suddenly he asked me, "How far are we from Stultzheim on the Rhine?"

"It is said to be almost seventeen leagues. That is the distance marked in kilometres on the railroad."

"Yes," he replied; "but I mean by the wagoners' route. Now, suppose Pauline had her trunk full of elegant dresses at Stultzheim, and wanted the trunk carted to St.-Eloi, how long would it take the package to reach you?"

"How should I know precisely?" I replied. "But we have, I think, some one here who could give you the exact information you require. Not papa, because these minor details escape him. I think this man can give you the distance, because some months ago several loads of machinery were sent to a cloth-factory within a half-mile of Stultzheim. M. Percival, our *contre-maitre*, must be able to tell you all about it. M. Percival directed the transportation."

"I would like to see him," said the general; and he touched a bell, when one of his orderlies came. Looking out of the window, I saw M. Percival seated on a bench in the court-yard, reading a book. I indicated M. Percival to the soldier, and in a few moments the *contre-maitre* was in the library, looking rather surprised.

"How long did it take you, sir," inquired the general, in a quick, military tone, "to move some machinery from the factory to Stultzheim?"

"Sixteen hours precisely sir," replied M. Percival, in an off-hand kind of way.

"What! and it is but fifteen leagues?" said the general.

"The machinery was heavy, and the road was bad. If I had to do it again, I might accomplish it in, perhaps, an hour and a half less."

"How?"

"By repairing the road."

"What! are the roads bad?"

"No worse than departmental roads are generally in this part of France, sir."

"Not so good as German roads?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I have traveled over those roads which are on the other side of the Rhine, at least across the river from Stultzheim."

"Here is this particular road," said the general; and he took up the book and spread out the map before him. "Here is St.-Eloi, and here is the— But my godfather, not being familiar with the locality, halted here."

"Yes," said M. Percival, "here are two streams which have to be crossed. The first bridge is excellent and sound, the second one I feel sure is defective. Here are two boggy places, which will get worse in two weeks' time from now, when the streams rise. It rained heavily two days ago, and these summer storms on the Vosges swell the rivers rapidly. You would have—" Here M. Percival looked inquisitively at the general for an instant, and then came to a full pause.

"Is this plan yours?" said the general, taking out of his pocket the bit of flimsy tracing-paper and placing it over the engraved map.

"I think it must be," replied M. Percival.

"I see that it differs slightly from the original," said the general.

"Only because, sir, as was suggested to M. Delange, some alterations on the road were to be made, and, having been in the library a day or so ago, I made the proposed changes."

"You are the very man I want, then. Pray continue, sir."

"How—continue?"

"You paused when you stated that I should have some difficulty about something. Pray explain yourself."

"You would have no end of trouble with artillery there. Your guns, for a rapid movement, would be sure to be stuck."

"Who spoke about artillery or guns? Are you an Englishman?"

"No, sir; I am not."

"What made you think about moving cannon?"

"It simply suggested itself to my mind, as I suppose it must have to yours."

"Ah, indeed! You have seen service?"

"Yes."

"If not a liberty (for you wear an empty sleeve which I respect), did you lose your arm in action?"

None but a very apt engineer with a military training could have made that very neat tracing."

Here, dear Clémence, I would have given a good deal to stay, but the general dismissed me and retained M. Percival. I saw the general at dinner, and he sat beside me. Papa was at his best, and was the life of the table, but my godfather seemed absorbed. M. de Valbois was polite and courteous as usual, madame dignified and slightly incisive. M. Percival has his meals always served him in his room, and has not yet honored us with his company. When dinner was over we had coffee, as usual, in the small drawing-room overlooking the lawn. A dozen people had come in, officials from the *mairie*, some of our neighbors, and there was a sprinkling of officers. I went to the piano to play something, preparatory to whist, for the general and papa have an interminable game which has lasted for twenty years. The servants had arranged the card-tables, when an officer came in and presented a dispatch to the general. My godfather was at the table, and was in the act of cutting for a partner—I could see that, for M. de Valbois was turning over for me the leaves of a *nocturne*, as he is an excellent musician—when the general rose, excused himself, came to me, and begged M. de Valbois to take his place at the table. But Madame de Valbois had already occupied the position. I fancied I knew the reason why. It was because she wanted Raoul to be with me. The general read the dispatch—a brief one, apparently—by the candles at my piano. Of course, my *nocturne* came to a full stop. M. de Valbois left me in a minute, and went out of the drawing-room as if annoyed. I think I made a happy escape, for, somehow or other, I fancied the *grande affaire* was coming. I went on playing again, when my godfather gently put one of his hands on mine and said:

"My little Pauline, I have a service to ask you. What about this M. Percival? Who is he?"

"I assure you I do not know, save that he is papa's head-man, and that he places all confidence in him," I replied.

"An American?"

"Yes; though I have never exchanged a dozen words with him." I was surprised at the interest the general had taken in our *contre-maître*.

"Pauline, I want more information from the man. He has what we call a topographical head, and a knowledge of this country and of that across the river would be of great use to me, especially at this moment. Is he still-mouthed? Does he know how to hold his tongue?"

"Hold his tongue? Certainly he does, since he has never opened his mouth to me. But papa says he is a tomb of secrets. I assure you, though, I never had any confidences to impart to him," I added, with a laugh.

"Where is he now?"

"How should I know, general? Usually he smokes a cigar after his dinner, in the billiard-room, especially when nobody is there, as is probably the case just now. M. Percival is rather a misanthropic

kind of a person, perhaps unaccustomed to general society."

"Pauline, if I sent for him it might be noticed. You and I will saunter out, and you will take me to the billiard-room." So, unobserved, the general and I left the drawing-room, walked across the courtyard, a mere step to the billiard-room, and, sure enough, there was M. Percival, but M. de Valbois was there too.

"I will engage M. de Valbois in conversation," said the general, indicating M. Raoul, who was listlessly knocking the billiard-balls about, "while you will please say to your *contre-maître* that I should feel obliged to him if he would come to the library at once. You will also be good enough to intimate to him that he had better not mention to any one my having sent for him."

"But, dear godfather—" I should have declined, but the general's manner was very imperative, so I reluctantly obeyed. I felt very awkward and embarrassed, which, I suppose, may excuse the first words I said to M. Percival, which were—"Monsieur Percival does not play billiards?" The man looked amazed.

"Oh, pardon me!" I added; "that was so very stupid on my part; how can you play billiards, having but one—" Here I came to a full stop. But my curiosity got the better of me, and I asked him: "Would you tell me, sir, what Général de Frail, one of the ablest of our French officers, has found so interesting in my father's *contre-maître* as to be closeted with him for fully two hours to-day?"

"I can scarcely imagine, Mademoiselle Delange; but since you do me the honor of asking, I suppose the questions put to me by the general were precisely of such a character as an able man in the profession of arms would ask of any one who knew something about the roads in the neighborhood relative to the movement, I fancy, of a column of soldiers"—and M. Percival here rose, and bowed to me, as if declining any further conversation.

"Excuse my detaining you, sir; but this movement of soldiers will be on the railroad. Perhaps we will have a new road to build; then papa will have no end of contracts for rails and bridges."

"Scarcely," was Mr. Percival's reply.

"How scarcely?"

"It is no mission of peaceful enterprise which directs Général de Frail's attention."

"What do you mean, then? Pray be less enigmatical."

"I am not French, mademoiselle, and cannot feel exactly as you do. Perhaps you may think glory is everything."

This speech piqued me, and I did not see that he had any business to find fault with my love of glory; so I said quite petulantly, "Have you had glory enough in your own country?"

"Plenty of it, and I shall remember it all my life, because I cannot play billiards." That speech of his humbled me for the moment, but then I thought it was, if not unkind, at least unkind of him to recall what was nothing more than an inad-

vergency on my part. I commenced now to be really displeased.

"You are very sensitive, sir," I said. "Frenchmen do glory in such things; and what is an arm? It seems to me, though, that even with only one you have made yourself very useful to papa. But what do you mean by this pointed allusion to glory and France, which, thank Goodness, are inseparable?"

M. Percival seemed to hesitate for a moment, when he blurted out:

"War, mademoiselle, I am afraid, must be imminent, and as the iron-works and this château are very near the border, we shall be likely to suffer first."

Here was a revelation. I did not like his placing the *usine* first in prominence, and the château afterward. But what he said shocked me. I held my peace for a moment, and looked at the general, and saw he was growing impatient.

"You, then, sir, who know about war—are you acquainted with its horrors?" I inquired.

"I have been, mademoiselle."

"The general asked me just now whether M. Percival had a certain amount of reticence, and I took upon myself the liberty to state that he possessed that talent, and here I have had told me the drift of certain suspicions in regard to the matter Général de Frail talked to him about."

"Excuse me. Mademoiselle Pauline Delange asked me questions in such a personal way that I forgot myself. Had the general intimated secrecy, I would never have told you a word."

He rose again, and took his hat this time.

"It is well!" I said, rather triumphantly, imitating papa's manner. "Now the general wants you, probably in reference to the same subject. You can understand that you are to be silent about it. The general will be in the library. You will be good enough to go there at once."

That was like papa all over, and I felt delighted to be authoritative. M. Percival looked at me amazed. You have no idea, Clémence, how amazed a man with a bandage around the top of his head can look. But presently a smile came over his face, and he laughed—not exactly at me, but still he laughed. It was infectious, his laughter, and I laughed myself, as my authoritative manner must have been a dead failure. I added, "Since you have been rather overbearing in your manner, I hope the general will keep you closeted all night with him for a punishment."

"Who—I overbearing, mademoiselle? Your wish is a very unkind one, for my head aches now almost to splitting."

"Well, you will find some camphor-water on the second shelf of the library to the right of the door. I put it there for papa when he suffers from neuralgia. I am sorry for you. I had indeed forgotten that you had received quite a severe blow on the head. It is better, I trust."

"Oh, quite well," he continued. "But, mademoiselle, not being a Frenchman, and only a *contre-*

matre in your father's factory, I am not employed in a military capacity."

"Are you for the Germans?" I asked, quite excitedly.

"My sympathies are my own, and I am not bound to give them publicity—only, mademoiselle, I protest against your right, or anybody's, even your father's, as to ordering me to do anything which does not belong to my particular duties; then, besides, the fate of France"—and here he smiled rather maliciously—"might depend upon my being bright or stupid to-night, or on the contents of a camphor-bottle."

Evidently M. Percival was now laughing at me.

"Then you would in cold blood," I hotly said, "stand upon some high-flown principle of honor—which for the life of me I cannot understand—and see the château sacked and your dear *usine* burned, and papa ruined, because you did not exactly understand all the phases of the question?"

Then I thought I was making too serious a matter about it, and giving the *contre-matre* too great importance. I felt, though, for the first time, some vague, dread feeling of alarm at what might happen. Papa had declared that the idea of war with the Prussians was impossible.

"I have balanced the matter in my mind," said M. Percival, "and the scale just barely descends in favor of the *usine*. I owe a great deal to M. Delange. I should grieve if anything impaired his fortune."

"The *usine* again! and the château and its inmates!" I exclaimed, provoked at the cold-bloodedness of the man.

"What are these handsome grounds, this old château, when compared to whole square leagues of land trampled under foot, and women and children beggared, and turned out to starve and die?"

"You are tragic, sir—rather an alarmist!" but he had scared me.

"Perhaps I am, but I must beg your pardon if I have caused you any uneasiness in regard to the future. Tell the general I shall be in the library at once."

I have kept this letter by me, Clémence. I commenced it yesterday, and can only finish it for the late mail. Last night I could see the light burning in the general's quarters until almost dawn. Général de Frail and M. Percival must have been at it all night. Half a dozen times I heard the clatter of horses' feet in the court-yard. Once I saw a courier ride in at break-neck speed, and leave as rapidly as he came. At breakfast this morning papa looked grave, M. de Valbois anxious, and Madame de Valbois was in tears. There is a whole batch of letters coming in—regrets on the part of our intended guests, and the reason is the terrible nature of the events. At last! I have laid violent hands on a journal papa tried to hide from me. It is war. My God! and was the *contre-matre* right? The general came down late to breakfast. He was gay and pleasant, and cracked his jokes at my expense. Pauline, from

new knowledge of the country, was to have a staff-appointment; and, as there had been a Jeanne d'Arc, there might be a Pauline de St.-Eloi. He asked me if I had ever seen twenty-five thousand men on their march, and he assured me that, if I would mount my horse to-day and go forth with him to the very 'dige we had a dispute about, at precisely one o'clock, military time, I could see a whole *corps d'armée* on an advance. He would like me to come, he said, first to give him my opinion as to the appearance of the troops, and then it might be pleasant for me to bid him good-by, for he was to command the division. My dear old general's manner reassured us all, and his joking made papa smile. It seems we are to run the works to their utmost capacity day and night. We received this morning a contract for shot and shell, and all the gun-barrels we can forge. Papa says it will amount to some millions of francs. M. de Valbois is for the first time apparently excited, but has very kindly attempted to allay my anxieties. He has two uncles in the service, and Madame de Valbois is in tears over them. In a moment of nervous excitement she said to me, "My dear Pauline, how glad you should be that Raoul has not assumed the career of arms!" The general told us, since we had the initiative, that was half the battle. It seems, then, everything has been arranged, ready sprung for an emergency. My maid Babette is wild with excitement, and wants to fight herself, and the next moment is in tears about a certain Jean Baptiste, a good lad I know, who is in the artillery, and to whom she is engaged. M. Percival I have not seen. Papa says the *contre-maitre* is at work again, and that during some days (for papa goes to Paris by the same train which takes this letter) M. Percival will have entire direction. Evidently the danger of an inroad from our enemies the Prussians is remote, quite impossible, or papa would never have left me. But, Clémence, what if I should see war with all its horrors? It was eleven o'clock to-day when the general, with M. de Valbois, some twenty officers, and as many gentlemen from the neighborhood, left the château of St.-Eloi. We were quite a cavalcade, for the general's escort—a company of Guides—joined us a mile from St.-Eloi. We had some two leagues to go, and we all cantered along at a pleasant speed. It was a lovely day, such as one sees only in this dear country. Every field was blooming, and all seemed hushed in quiet repose. Great fields of colza stretched away, and broad spaces were covered with tobacco-plants. In the meadows the lazy cattle gazed at us as we clattered down the road. There was a gentle breeze, which kept off the dust, just swaying the trees, and the tall poplars rustled so pleasantly. Occasionally, as we passed, groups of peasants working in the fields would stop from their labors, and the women would courtesy to us, while the men would doff their hats, and gaze at our gallant appearance, and cry out in their *patois*, "Vive la France!" The sweet odors of the freshly-cut hay pervaded the air with fragrance. Away off in the distance—for the day was so clear—we could

see the Vosges Mountains, standing out blue and gray on the horizon. The general and I headed the cavalcade. I had on my new riding-habit, the one you sent me, and the dear old general had with his own hands put a heron's plume in my hat. My little bay horse was looking his best, and kept readily alongside of the general's impatient charger. We all took a breathing-spell at a pretty brook and let our horses drink, when we pushed on again at a hand-gallop, so as to be in good time for the arrival of the troops. Just as we arrived at the designated place the general pointed to a rising bit of ground as best adapted to my witnessing the approach of the division.

"Pauline, you are to be my picket," said the general, looking at his watch. "We are in good time. That little American told me of an elevation, just here, big enough to hold a single battery, which completely covered the approaches to the road; and, sure enough, there it is, and there is the clump of trees which would mask it. Your *contre-maitre* has decidedly a military *coup-d'œil*. Pauline, push on your little horse, and see which of us two can scramble up first."

I spoke to my horse, who with a bound took the lead, and I was first. I think the general played me false, for he held in his charger, then dismounted, and was soon surrounded by a group of officers. He drew out a note-book, and commenced writing, and then he addressed an officer, who wrote under his dictation. It was grand to look down from where I was at the little military assemblage below me. The escort had dismounted, and had formed themselves into picturesque groups. Presently the general, M. de Valbois, and a major, the head of the staff, came to me, and they all helped me to alight. It was precisely one o'clock by the major's watch. But no signs of the troops were visible. The general gave an order, and some half-dozen cavalymen were in the saddle in a second, and in an instant more were out of sight. M. de Valbois and the officer talked to me, while I pointed out to the major the Vosges hills, and called them each by name. It was half-past one now, and, though the major used a formidable kind of opera-glass, no cloud of dust was visible in the distance. The general became impatient. I had been wise enough to think of luncheon, and the contents of the baskets M. de Valbois's groom and mine had brought were soon disposed of, but the general would not touch a morsel. "He was smoking," he said, "and had no appetite." The fact is, the general was in a terrible rage, all the worse because it was smothered. It was not one of those temporary gusts which papa indulges in, but something of the most concentrated character. The staff, apparently knowing his mood, kept aloof from him. Presently he called a captain and a lieutenant to him, and in a half-dozen brief words, which snapped like the crack of a whip, told them to "ride on all day, if necessary, until they met the column." Off they started at full speed, at a break-neck pace, both gentlemen jumping their horses over a high hedge. It was almost half-past two before these officers came back, all covered with dust, and their

horses flecked with foam. Faintly, now, now, ever so faintly, in the distance I heard the sounds of the clarion, and then the roll of the drum. The general pricked up his ears. Nearer came the trumpet-calls, and now the advance, a squad of cavalry, was visible. Then I saw the first files of the infantry, and I could make out in the plain below a long, straggling line of artillery and the wagons. It was a superb and glorious pageant, and filled me with the idea of power and strength. Our own little body of men were ordered in the saddle and formed below, just beyond the bridge. Just then an infantry regiment caught sight of our dear old general, who was on horseback alongside of me on top of the little knoll, and they cried and shouted, and their *vivas* were caught up by the next soldiers, until it was carried all along the line, and rolled away far into the distance. The officers saluted, and the military bands burst out. I turned to Général de Frail, trusting to see some expressions of pleasure on his face, but his face showed no emotion. He was stern and grave. In my enthusiasm I could have shouted, too, and as it was had drawn out my handkerchief, and was waving it.

"My dear Pauline," said the general, "it is true the *tenue* of the men is superb, but, though it all looks so very fine, the division is exactly two hours and five minutes too late—behind time—and I will have to punish some one severely. Now, my child, good-by, and God bless you! When the war is over, we will certainly see one another.—M. de Valbois, I wish you a good-day.—Pauline, kiss your father for me. Pauline, it is a common saying that one can't have an omelet without breaking eggs; and rest assured we are going to give and receive no end of hard knocks.—Ah! here come some brave old friends of mine;" and the general pointed to a regiment, and he showed me its flag. "I commanded some of those men in the Crimea, and we have known what it was to suffer and to be happy together. It is almost my family, for that is my old regiment. I carried that flag when I was a stripling—those same shreds of silk." Here my godfather unbent for the first time, removing his *képi* as the men shouted out his name. "Now, Pauline, my darling, good-by, and may God bless you! We shall see each other again;" and he kissed me tenderly, and I felt a tear on his brave old face. The general's staff then bade me adieu, and took their places in the column, their chief at their head. Dear general! He stood up in his stirrups, looking at me over the tops of the guns, waved his hand to me, and then he disappeared in a bend of the road. It would have been fully two hours before the rear-guard could have passed us. Now M. de Valbois and some three other gentlemen made up the party. We did not wait to see the last of the soldiers. As we turned bridle to go homeward I felt very much like crying. We came home slowly. Still the sweet scent of the clover was in the air, but it gave me a headache. I do not think I said anything to M. Raoul, who rode alongside of me, save to answer him in monosyllables. In fact, we all, I fancy, were more or less

oppressed. I had been over-excited, I suppose, and felt exhausted. The atmosphere might have had something to do with it, for a storm was gathering in the Vosges away off in the distance. Presently we heard the faint reverberation of the thunder, and I trembled so—who am not a nervous woman—that I checked my horse. It was God's artillery and not man's. M. de Valbois urged speed, in order to escape the rain, which we could see driving up from the hills, and we pushed our horses. Just as we got to the château the rain came down in torrents. I rushed into the house to give papa the general's parting words, but he was gone. I had forgotten his intended departure. I have passed a dreary evening with Madame de Valbois, whose presence seems to depress me. It appears that Madame de Valbois's mother saw the horrors of 1815, and the lady must needs tell them all to me. The whole of France is only interesting to Madame de Valbois as having to do with her or her son's interests, or those of the De Valbois. M. Raoul had gone to St.-Eloi to hear the news. I have pleaded my unfinished letter to you as an excuse to be alone. And now, dear Clémence, I have just time to finish this, and send it by André. Somehow, if I commenced this gayly, I feel in wretched spirits to-night. My kindest regards to M. de Montfriand.

For ever and ever,

PAULINE.

(*Madame de Montfriand to Pauline Delange.*)

PARIS, July —, 1870.

MY PAULINE: I can fancy your alarm. That you are nervous and excited, I can readily understand. Instantly on receipt of your letter I saw my father, and it is all arranged. M. de Montfriand will call on M. Delange to-day, in order to urge your immediate departure from St.-Eloi. You must come to Paris and live with us. If war has its misfortunes, it shall serve at least to reunite us. There, poor little dear, the whole matter is concluded. Of course, it is a serious business—for the Prussians. My eldest brother, the colonel of Spahis, arrived here yesterday from Algiers, and leaves for the Rhine to-morrow. He has an appointment in Général de Frail's division, and your acquaintance with this gallant officer may be of use to the colonel. I spoke to my brother about St.-Eloi, and he laughed away my tears: That part of Alsace, he assures me, is just where our French torrent will pour out which must submerge Germany. He told me that all the risk you would run would be to have your old château filled with our officers, and that in a week from now there would not be a chicken or a turkey or a goose on your farms, because the gallant French soldier would have exterminated them. My dear Pauline, there is no danger. I read to mamma that portion of your letter in regard to Madame de Valbois, and what she said of mamma, and mamma feels quite complimented. Nonsense, child, about your aristocratic friends! Though the Du Parcs trace their origin back to the Crusades (the Montfriands were only a goodish family, just emerging from obscurity in the

beginning of the last century), you, Pauline, are worth ten times more than I, having a truer nobility of soul. But, my Pauline—but what is all this you write me about some *contre-maitre*, a M. Percival and his dog Bobe? Take care! I do not like Americans—at least those from North America. *Passé donc*, for those hailing from South America, who are more like Spaniards or Italians, less their originality; but there is an assumption about these people from the United States which is annoying at times, because we can never place them. Imagine a youth we met in the Pyrenees last year, living *en prince*, a gentleman spending his money in the most lavish way, the leader of the hunting-parties, the whole place, in fact, at his beck and call, a ravishing dancer, a breaker of hearts withal, who turned out to be a *commis voyageur* in a silk or dry-goods house in New York, the rival of our *petit St.-Thomas*! You never can know who they are. You seem honestly, Pauline, to be just a little *entichée* about your dog and his former master. *Inprimis*, send back the dog. I have so little sympathy for your *caniche* that, should M. Raoul de Valbois's Persian hound swallow him, I should admire all the more Bobe's mausoleum. Suppose a *contre-maitre* does happen to have ridden on top of a wagon loaded with old iron, does that constitute him a remarkable personage? He may have lost his arm by some mechanical mishap. Are you to fall in love with all the one-armed or one-legged men? Suppose he did have his head broken in your father's service, is he not paid just in proportion to the risks he runs? Pauline! Pauline! are you not rehearsing, all to yourself, a certain quite pretty story, entitled "The Romance of a Poor Young Man?" You and I read it once together, *en cachette*, at school, and do you remember we borrowed it from that very Miss Smeef? I asked mamma about M. Raoul de Valbois, and she sounded his praises, and assured me that she had always understood that M. de Valbois was some day or other destined to make you, my Pauline, happy. There is nothing of the inevitable about this! I am two years older than you, *ma mie*, and might presume, not as much on my seniority as on my position as a married woman. School-girl romances are dropped with *pain au confitures*. As to M. Raoul de Valbois, if you have not exactly a community of sympathy, your fortunes are alike, your ages approximate (M. de Montfriad is twelve years my senior, and I scarcely knew him before my marriage). So, Pauline, take happiness, even if it is thrust on you. Mamma, too, extols Madame de Valbois, as possessing many amiable qualities, which perhaps you may have overlooked. Now, I pause just here, and, as I read over my last two or three paragraphs, I fear I may unwittingly have been dreadfully officious, and may have presented to you matters in quite an unwarrantable light. This M. Percival may be nothing more to you than any other workman. But, Pauline, under your calm exterior I fancy at times I discover something like a *tête exaltée*. I even imagine I see certain womanly indications—weaknesses, Pauline, such as spring from a heart which knows no guile, at least for me—I who

am your best and dearest friend. You always reflected on the surface what was in your heart. That is why, in this insincere and hollow world, I always loved you. Long ago I went to that school of manners where feelings are concealed. Come, come, Pauline, forgive me if I have wounded you; but I am a little afraid about you, not as to any risks the war can bring to the gentle *châtelaine* of St.-Eloi, but because cooped up with Madame de Valbois, and having M. Raoul de Valbois *en grippe*, at least for the present, you might become pensive, melancholy, or, what is worse, fall in love with the wrong man. Your father dines with us to-day, and he shall fix the day of your departure from St.-Eloi. Now I dismiss the subject. My brother says we must bivouac in Berlin, under the lindens, in a month from now at the very farthest. No power in Europe can withstand the valor of our soldiers. All France is in arms, and the glories of the first empire will pale before the wonderful fortunes of Napoleon III. My father leaves shortly for Italy on a diplomatic mission, and my husband accompanies him; so you see, Pauline, how much I shall want your company. It is said that, notwithstanding the war, the season will be a gay one. Your provincial toilet will want refurbishing when you come; you shall have the full benefit of my experience. The smoke of your forges has certainly got into your handsome head, and given you such strange ideas that I almost think a little gunpowder in the distance will help to clear up your mental atmosphere. Come, then, to Paris, and the strong walls of the city shall protect you, as will the loving arms of

Your very best friend,

CLEMENCE DE MONTFRIAND.

(From *Hugh Percival to George Terhune, of New York.*)

ST.-ELOI, VOSGES, FRANCE, July —, 1870.

MY DEAR GEORGE: It must now be fully eight months since I wrote to you, telling you that I had obtained a position at the iron-works here. I am better both in mind and body. It will take, though, a long time before the remembrance of all I have lost, that sad void in my life, will pass out of my mind. Perhaps if I had been left for dead at Cold Harbor it would have been better. Then I never would have learned that the woman I loved—your sister, George—perished when the false news of my death was carried to her. I must confess that the idea of my becoming a soldier of fortune, and of taking service in Egypt, never but half pleased me. I never wrote you how I happened to be in Alsace. It was my intention, with what small means I had left, to settle for a year or so in some quiet German university town, where there was a professor of Oriental languages, and acquire some of the more necessary Eastern tongues. Home was, if not distasteful, at least painful to me, who had lost the dear one who was to fill it. I had been advised to take a pedestrian tour, to cure a certain shakiness of nerves, and was trudging through Alsace, when I stumbled across M. Delange, the master of quite an extensive

iron-works here, who gave me employment. Some-
 how I have made my way very rapidly. Those eight
 years passed at your father's iron-works were not
 lost to me. I have charge, now, of a vast establish-
 ment, which at the present moment is encumbered
 with business. M. Delange, in fact, leaves me al-
 most too much to do. I break my long silence, be-
 cause, since France and Germany are to fight, you
 might be annoyed at not hearing from me. Now,
 with what experience I may have acquired of a gen-
 eral strategic character, I am pretty sure that just
 about the spot where I am writing this, St.-Eloi, will
 be the exact focal point of no end of cannon-balls.
 All France seems cock-a-hoop about this war, and
 thinks it nothing more than a *tournée militaire*. I
 am afraid they will be mistaken. I knew a host of
 German officers who fought on our side during the
 civil war, and from their ability, and from what they
 told me, I am pretty certain that France will have
 her hands full. I deem it singularly unfortunate
 that I should be even near the scene of action. I
 cannot leave St.-Eloi, as six months ago I entered
 into an engagement with M. Delange to remain with
 him for another year, on terms proposed by him,
 which were of the most liberal character. Of course,
 if the Prussians surround St.-Eloi I must capitulate,
 but not before. In the mean time, I am making
 shot and shell, and forging gun-barrels. Mind you,
 we are not over seventy-five miles from the Rhine, and
 our factory is known to be turning out materials of
 war. If there is a Sheridan or a Kilpatrick on the
 German side, and their cavalry-officers are not want-
 ing in *elan*, some fine day they will break bounds,
 and smash our tall chimneys over our heads, for our
 smoke can be seen for miles around. I have an ad-
 mirable set of workmen, and have no trouble. I
 fancy Alsatian workmen are the best in Europe for
 industry and good judgment. Of acquaintances I
 have none. M. Delange has frequently invited me
 to the house, a fine old château, and would have
 liked, so I think, to show me that civility which is
 rather rare in France between employer and em-
 ployé, but I suppose I have rather stupidly, if not
 coldly, though I trust not impolitely, declined his
 advances. Nevertheless, I have been a forced guest
 at the house, having had a bad attack of headache,
 brought on by an accident. The noise of the ham-
 mers in the forge—for my lodgings are in a house
 adjacent to the factory—would have retarded my re-
 covery, so I was very kindly taken to the château. I
 am quite well now, having resumed work a week ago.
 There is a Mademoiselle Pauline Delange, an exceed-
 ingly handsome-looking young lady of twenty, the
 only child of M. Delange. Mademoiselle Delange,
 for a French girl, thanks to her life in the provin-
 ces, seems to me to be quite a natural and unaf-
 fected kind of a person. I find that M. Delange
 consults her sometimes in regard to his business, and
 occasionally she comes to the factory and takes an
 interest in what is going on. I think she does a
 great deal of good among the workmen's families,
 and plays an important part in their society of *bien-
 faisance*. I have been very shy of her; for, though

I half suspect she knows I am useful to her father,
 she rather distrusts me as a fitting guest at the châ-
 teau. She does not disturb me, however, in the
 least. During her father's absence in Paris, she
 came to the office, accompanied by a Madame de
 Valbois, and the two interrupted me for fully an
 hour asking me a series of questions having to do
 with the military opening of the campaign, about
 which they really know more than I do, for my time
 is so absolutely engaged that I have not had even
 the chance to read the papers. Somehow I have the
 reputation of being a military oracle. Even the
 workmen ask me long questions, ending, "Excuse
 me, but since monsieur has seen service, he perhaps
 can tell us." I wonder how they knew I had been
 in the wars? There is a M. de Valbois, a young
 Parisian *élégant*, an *attaché* of legation, quite a
 fine gentleman, who has condescended to make
 my acquaintance, and who was good enough to ex-
 press his surprise at the character of the books I was
 reading when I was ill at the château. Both Made-
 moiselle Delange and this gentleman have been in
 the *usine* all the afternoon, very much in the way, I
 assure you, especially as the lady insisted on having
 M. de Valbois witness the making of a large casting,
 and I could not help being amused at the way the
 young lady enjoyed the spectacle of seeing a well-
 dressed man like M. de Valbois exposed to a shower
 of sparks, which must have ruined both their clothes.
 There, I have given you the details of my surround-
 ings, save M. Delange, for whom I have a great lik-
 ing and respect. The master is a portly gentleman
 of over sixty, somewhat hot-headed and impetuous,
 with an indomitable will, a good eye to business, and
 who places, I am pleased to say, full confidence in
 me. Now, George, should you not hear from me
 for the next six months, do not believe that I am
 dead. You will probably be better informed on the
 other side of the Atlantic about the movements of
 the opposing forces than I will be, who am likely to
 be in the midst of it. Pray be good enough to send
 to my bankers in Brussels what little balance of
 money may be in your hands belonging to me. The
 excitement and bustle here are at a fever-heat. I
 am well and strong, perfectly restored to health, and,
 being fully occupied, have less time to think of my
 past troubles.

Most affectionately,

HUGH PERCIVAL.

(Pauline to Clémence.)

CHÂTEAU ST.-ELOI, August —, 1870.

DEAR CLEMENCE: I write you in an agony of
 mind. Ten days ago my father returned from Paris,
 apparently well, bringing me news of you. Three
 days ago he was stricken down with a terrible illness,
 whether from mental excitement or overwork we
 cannot tell. For two days he was perfectly uncon-
 scious. This morning for the first time he showed
 some faint signs of returning life. All my prepara-
 tions for leaving St.-Eloi were completed—against
 my will, Clémence, not that I would not have liked
 to be with you, but because I could not bear to leave
 my father. As my father is so ill, you can under-

stand, Clémence, that I must be with him now. My place is by his side. I could scarcely have found time, Clémence, to write you this, if it were not to inform you that, unless my father's condition improves, I will not quit St.-Eloi. I have just had an anxious talk with our doctor. He says: "Any movement will endanger your father's life. With skillful nursing, it may be a month, two months, before he can even take an airing in a carriage." Think of it, Clémence! I have been almost alone in the château, and like it the better. M. de Valbois left a week ago for Paris, under orders from the Foreign Department. Madame de Valbois is still at the château. Yesterday the first wounded men came in, for there has been a hospital established at St.-Eloi, and, as the men were carried through the village, Madame de Valbois happened to see them, and has been hysterical ever since. She is not exactly selfish, only the war has unnerved her. It may do so for me, for aught I know. I do not think that Madame de Valbois can possibly remain at St.-Eloi, as she has already expressed her desire to be within the walls of Paris. From all that I have gleaned of war-news I am afraid we may run some risk here, and there is no reason why Madame de Valbois should suffer on my account; so I shall throw no obstacle in the way of her departure, but be rather glad if she does leave. I do not in any way, my dear Clémence, think it in the least unbecoming for you to write as you did about M. Percival. It was the *contre-maître* who brought my poor father to me, for the attack took place at the *usine*. All I know about M. Percival is, that he is at work night and day, though he calls morning and evening to inquire about my father. I have somehow commenced to think that, without M. Percival at the *usine*, matters there, with the master prostrated, would be in dire confusion. I have learned to respect the *contre-maître*, and, if you will have it, Clémence, to be rather in awe of him—only this and nothing more. My dear father is all to me, and so absorbs my thoughts that I sometimes forget that we are in the midst of a horrible war. Do you, Clémence, pray for my father's restoration to health, and for France, and for your friend

PAULINE.

(*M. Hugh Percival to Mademoiselle Delange.*)

GROSHEIM, August —, 1870.

WILL Mademoiselle Delange receive my thanks for the information she imparts to me in regard to the improved condition of her father? Madame de Valbois I had the honor to escort to Nancy, as requested by you, and the lady is now on her way to Paris. In the present condition of the railroads, given up entirely to the army, non-military travelers find more or less difficulty in their movements. This little journey to Nancy, as I had the honor of informing you, can in no way be prejudicial to the business of St.-Eloi. At Nancy I obtained permission to use an accumulation of coal belonging to the Government, now actually at Grosheim. This will explain to you why I am still at Grosheim. This

afternoon I shall dispatch a train of coal-wagons to St.-Eloi, so that our work will continue. I regret exceedingly the fact announced by you that the military hospitals have been removed from St.-Eloi, since they deprive you of the services of the surgeon. If M. Delange's condition should improve, I would, of course, advise your leaving the château with your father, and seeking other quarters. But the work at the *usine* must continue night and day. Were your father well to-day, it would be a point of honor with him to do his utmost to supply the Government, and fulfill his contract as far as practicable. A few hours before M. Delange was taken ill, he imparted his wishes to me to this effect. Should M. Delange's health be such that he cannot be moved, as you state, the path of duty is plain, and you ought to stay with him. I trust to be at St.-Eloi to-morrow.

With great respect,

Your very obedient servant,

H. PERCIVAL.

(*Pauline to Clémence.*)

CHATEAU ST.-ELOI, August —, 1870.

DEAR CLEMENCE: This may be the very last letter to you. Thank God, my father is better! If this improvement continues, there may be some slight hopes of our moving him. My father knows nothing of the dire calamities which have befallen our country, that our armies have been vanquished, and that the blood of our soldiers is flowing like water. I hear the most sinister news, and I see faces all around me pale with alarm. Some of our best hands at the *usine* have volunteered; others, more timid, are removing from the approaching scene of the contest. The main road before the château is crowded with poor peasants, who plod on in a piteous way with their wives and children, seeking safety in flight. It looks pretty much like isolation for us here. I am assured that, although our works are in one sense a source of danger as likely to draw an inroad from the enemy, strong efforts will be made to hold St.-Eloi to the last. You understand, Clémence, what that means. Almighty God! am I to see scenes of carnage around my home, and my poor father deprived of even the necessities of life? The *usine* is still at work—a detail of soldiers replacing the workmen who have left us. O Clémence, I have been for two days in an agony of grief, all the harder, all the more terrible, because I have been forced to conceal the news from my poor father. Général de Frail is dead—was killed in action. Brave gentleman, whom I loved next to my father! Some days ago I asked for tidings about him. No one seemed to be willing to tell me anything. The day before yesterday I overheard André apostrophize the portrait of my godfather, which hangs in the library, in such touching terms that I suspected he was concealing something from me. "André, André!" I cried, "is the general alive?" "He is dead, poor mademoiselle! He tried alone to turn defeat into victory, and fell a martyr to his country. What a loss! I never can see his picture without talking to it. He was the bravest of the brave, and many a kind word

he has said to me. Mademoiselle, before he left us, he did me the honor to ask me how long I had been attached to the family. On my telling him 'Twenty years,' he said to me: 'André, my good man, you must never leave them. Take good care of Mademoiselle Pauline, my godchild, and M. Delange.' Mademoiselle, come what may, I for one, until the Prussians batter this house over my old head, will never leave it, nor cease to care for you and yours."

My agony was so great, Clémence, that I could not even cry. I fell on my knees, and prayed for the repose of my godfather's soul. Think of the sad coincidence—the misfortune of the thing, for papa sent just then for me, and the first thing he said was: "Pauline, you give me no news about De Frail? You may depend upon it, our general is giving it to those villainous Prussians. De Frail is one of those *dur-à-cuire* that no ball can touch or harm. When De Frail comes back he will be more insupportable than ever—such long stories he will have to tell me! Perhaps the emperor will make him a duke. He

ought to have been made one long ago. How I hope to annoy him one of these days by calling him M. le Duc on all occasions! When we play whist together, I shall say to him, 'M. le Duc should not have trumped that trick;' or, 'If M. le Duc cannot play better than that, let him take to domino!' Pauline, I think if I only saw my dear old friend again, I should get well." Then my poor father laughed a merry laugh, and rubbed his hands in childish glee. I thought I should die.—I can write no more. In this big house there are to-day but my father and I, André and Babette. M. Percival sent me a brief note this morning, stating that, if I had any letters for Paris, I had better forward them at once to him for transmission. I draw a terrible augury from this. Matters must be at their worst when postal communication is closed. I have but time to say, God bless you, Clémence, and may we see each other again!

For ever and ever,

PAULINE.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A TALE OF NEW ORLEANS.

BY MRS. H. F. LEE, AUTHOR OF "THREE EXPERIMENTS OF LIVING," "THE HUGUENOTS," "OLD PAINTERS," ETC.



N the summer of 18—, the yellow fever prevailed in New Orleans with unusual severity; even many who had at first looked on with tranquillity because they were "acclimated," were attacked by this dreadful disorder, and finally fell victims. The hearse

moved rapidly through the streets, and the burial-grounds were thronged with silent inhabitants. The exertions that are made by the benevolent who remain in the city are great. Immense sums are expended for the relief of the sick; and the care of strangers and adventurers who are drawn to this busy place in pursuit of wealth they are doomed never to enjoy, becomes a public concern. The exigency of the times at the period to which we allude, called for uncommon exertion. Nor were the inhabitants found wanting; many a sufferer was carefully attended, and some few restored to life and health. As the season advanced, the fatal sickness disappeared. The citizens returned to their accustomed occupations; the streets were again thronged, the houses of public amusement thrown open, and the gambling houses once more crowded.

Among the gay young men who resorted to these haunts was Julian Leonetz. Though he frequented them often, it was merely as a spectator and in compliance with the urgency of a few dissipated young men with whom he had unfortunately become acquainted. When questioned on the subject, he assured his friends that he was principled against gambling; that he came to study character in its different guises. The countenance, too, was one of his studies, and his portfolio was filled with sketches, not of the "human face divine," but with the distorted and frightful expression of the gamester.

It was likewise his object to acquire knowledge of the world that he might guard against its deceptions, and where could this be more effectually done than at a place where disguise was a fruitless attempt—where the mask fell from the face of the hypocrite and he stood revealed in all the deformity of avarice and revenge.

The companions who had conducted him to the spot, applauded his thirst for knowledge, and one of them asserted that Leonetz, at twenty-four, knew more of the world than most men did at thirty. Julian walked about the room with folded arms, gazed upon one group, then upon another, and

sketched the most striking expressions of rage and despair.

This conduct soon gave umbrage, and his companions advised him to make a small bet in self-defence. He did as he was advised; fortune favoured him, and evening after evening he continued to play till he had won sums of magnitude. Where was now his philosophy or principle? He afforded one of the illustrations of an exulting gamester; yet nothing had been farther from his intentions than to enter the list. He persuaded himself that he could not now retreat without being branded as dishonourable;—he even believed that if he could lose a little he would quit play forever.

Night after night he continued to win; he no longer thought of observing others; his attention became absorbed in his own play, and he passed whole nights at the gaming-table.

Vice does not openly complete her victory; her advances are slow and insidious. Leonetz was manly and liberal while he continued to win. At length fortune began to change, and he lost large sums; he grew irritable and tenacious, staked injudiciously, and swallowed glass after glass of the wine that his more experienced adversary placed by his side. One evening, as he cast his eyes up he perceived a man rather advanced gazing upon him. At first he took no notice of him, but when he found he still kept the same position and fixed on him a keen and penetrating look, Leonetz could not repress a secret feeling of embarrassment. As soon as the game was ended the stranger left the room. The following night, however, he again made his appearance and stood opposite Leonetz, fixing upon him a pair of gloomy, spectral eyes.

Leonetz was conscious he had himself pursued the same course in his early visits to the gaming-house, and he restrained his indignation; but the third night, when the man again appeared as before and took his station opposite to him, he could refrain no longer.

"By what right," exclaimed he, "do you place yourself directly before me as a spy upon my conduct?"

The stranger smiled sarcastically, and said—"You are a young man, or you would understand you have no right to control the movements of any gentleman. We are at liberty to stand where we please, and it is only those who are new in the world who imagine themselves the point of observation for others."

"This is the evasion of a coward!" replied Leonetz, furiously. "You know well you have

some design in this thing. Take your stand elsewhere;” and he rose from the table impetuously.

“Why quarrel?” said the stranger, calmly. “You are trying your luck—I am disposed to try mine. Let us meet on the spot to-morrow evening; or,” added he, “let us try now.”

Leonetz hesitated, but he saw encouragement in the countenances of those around him. He staked and won. It was late before they separated, and when they did he was greatly the winner.

“To-morrow evening,” said the stranger, as he left the room, “we meet again.”

“To-morrow evening!” repeated Leonetz.

His friends gathered round him and congratulated him on his luck, and urged him to pursue it. “It is old Pedastro,” said they; “he has won money from us all, and of late the miser has refused to stake. He thinks you are newly fledged, and means to pluck you. He has made his calculations. It is for this he has watched you night after night. Let him find himself mistaken. He fancies your luck is about turning, and that he is just in time to reap the golden harvest.”

“We must begin, however,” said Leonetz, with a laugh, “to doubt his calculations. He is some hundreds poorer than when he came.”

“Not at all; your success this evening confirms him in his doctrine of changes. He will come to-morrow evening confident of winning. Let him find his mistake. We should be heartily glad to see him stripped of every farthing he has.”

Julian was not so entirely initiated in the low, unfeeling revenge and exultation of gaming as not to express some disapprobation of this mode of speaking.

“It is because you don’t know the old miser,” said they. “He would see his own brother starving at his door and would not give him a cent to save his life. I tell you he is a common curse. Rob him of his fangs and you will do mankind a benefit. It was but a few years ago that he won from a young man all he owned himself and half of his master’s ready money. In a fit of desperation, he dirked the old fellow and himself into the bargain; and luckily for him his blow at home was the surest.”

“If he thinks,” said Leonetz, “to make a fool of me, he may find himself mistaken. At least, I will have one trial with him.”

They met evening after evening; one stake and another followed;—sometimes one won, sometimes the other. Upon the whole, however, Leonetz was the predominant winner. The energy of his character, which had once been directed towards high pursuits, had now for its object the accumulation of gold. The wild, wasting, harassing life of a gamester soon destroyed the intellectual and personal endowments which nature had profusely lavished on him, and which had procured him the esteem and affection of the virtuous. His taste for knowledge and the fine arts became extinguished; he no longer made acquisitions in science. In

the sometimes flushed and sometimes deadly paleness of his face, in the dark, gloomy, yet fiery expression of his eye, might be read the miserable history of his life. It was not only the love of gaming that had taken possession of his breast, but the lust of gold. Those who once loved and respected him, tried in vain to withdraw him from his haunts, and, repulsed and discouraged, they left him to his fate and shunned his society. He became, of course, wholly dependent on the dissolute and licentious for amusement.

One morning as he was returning from his nocturnal occupation, after a night of ill-luck, he sauntered up Levee street. The sun had just risen in its wonted splendour, and shed its glorious beams on the broad smooth waters of the Mississippi, which now rose to the height of the levee and seemed ready to overflow its artificial barriers. The steamboats of the western world lay still and motionless at the wharves, but smaller craft were plying their oars or spreading their white sails to catch the faint breezes that scarcely ruffled the water. Vessels from yet more southern climes were unloading their rich and luxuriant freights of tropical fruits. The sailors, the mechanics, even the slaves—all seemed cheerful and happy in the honest and healthy labours of active life.

A remnant of higher and better days came over Leonetz as he gazed upon the scene; he felt a pang shoot through his heart, and pressing both hands upon his feverish brow, he exclaimed aloud—“Oh, God!”

He was arrested by a low, soft voice, that said—“Are you ill, sir?”

He started and turned round. By his side stood a young girl, who appeared in the first bloom of life. She was attended by a black girl with a basket of provisions on her head.

Julian did not immediately answer, and the young girl added—“I believe I have interrupted you unnecessarily. Strangers are sometimes seized with sudden sickness here, and I thought you might want help.”

Leonetz, a few weeks before, had been ranked among the refined and attractive. It was not strange that it did not immediately occur to him how different was his present appearance, that, unshaved and “unkempt,” with disordered dress, bloodshot eyes and haggard expression, he was not an object of admiration. Bowing low to the young lady, he thanked her for her benevolent interest, disclaimed all indisposition, and begged he might have the honour of seeing her safe home, offering his arm at the same time.

The young lady regarded him with a look of surprise. “My motive for speaking,” said she, “was common humanity;” and she turned coldly away.

He stood gazing after her with an indefinite feeling of self-abasement. She crossed the square which fronts the cathedral, and entered it. It was early mass. The attendant passed on with the market-basket. “At least,” thought he, “I may

go to church; I have as good a right to say my prayers as she has;" and with a hasty step, he crossed the square and entered the same door of the cathedral he had seen her enter. The church was far from being thronged, and it was not difficult to distinguish her among the audience. She was kneeling on the pavement. Her white dress and white veil that floated over her slender symmetrical figure awoke his early classical associations. He almost wished for his portfolio and crayons, and he determined to revive his favourite pursuit of drawing. Some of the paintings in the cathedral attracted his attention; he gazed upon them a few moments. When he turned, the young lady had disappeared. Vexed to be thus baffled, he quitted the church and looked for her in every direction, but was unsuccessful in his pursuit. All day her image was before him; but when evening came and he went to the gaming-table, it vanished and appeared no more.

No emulation, no excitement engenders such ferocious or deadly passions as gaming. Pedastro and Leonetz were constant rivals. Hitherto the luck, though fluctuating, had been on the part of Leonetz; but fortune began to show her usual caprice. His winnings gradually disappeared. At length he found himself reduced to his last hundred. It was lost by a single turn of a card. His diamond breast-pin, his jeweled watch, next followed each other, and he arose from the table not only penniless but deeply in debt to Pedastro.

"I will give you my note," said he, "for the money."

"What is your note good for?" said his merciless creditor. "No—no; I am too old to be gulled in that way."

"Perhaps," said Leonetz, with an acute sense of shame, "you may lend me a few dollars to try my luck at another table, and I may be successful and able to pay you all I have lost?"

"A winner is not expected to lend to a loser," said Pedastro, sneeringly. "No—no, young man; borrow elsewhere, and I will give you a chance."

With sentiments of hatred and revenge, Leonetz parted from his antagonist. He had but one wish—it was to see him reduced as low as he himself now was, that he might scoff at him, trample upon him, and behold him writhing under the same mortification that he experienced.

He repaired to the *friends* who had first initiated him in play. One among them had the generosity to lend him a small sum on condition it should be doubled in payment. On this loan Julian began anew, and in three nights he found himself master of a larger sum than he had ever possessed. Who can describe the rapture with which he gazed upon his hoard. It was not now avarice alone, but a more absorbing passion had united with it. It was revenge. "I will crush the wretch!" he exclaimed. "Pedastro shall howl in his misery, and I will laugh at his torments."

He sought his antagonist, paid what he owed, and challenged him again. With sharpened powers

and faculties they met. Leonetz was no longer headstrong or impetuous. Revenge and hatred had become the ruling passions of his soul. He now exercised the same slow and cautious calculation that Pedastro had exercised towards him. It would be painful to follow the antagonists in their fluctuations of fortune, to describe the low and fierce contention, the satanic exultation, the inward curses! Who that now looked on Leonetz could have recognized in him the being that a few months before was treading the path of science, his countenance animated by intelligence, even his very exterior denoting that self-respect that belongs to high and honourable pursuits? Face to face he sat with his arch-enemy, and scarcely less repulsive in his appearance, except that his youth might inspire some emotions of pity; and, perhaps, in those who had not witnessed the all-engrossing effects of this fatal propensity, a slight hope of better things.

Pedastro had already lost a large sum to Leonetz. His face assumed an ashy paleness; his eyes were fixed and glazed. "I have no more money to stake," said he; and he arose from the table.

"Perhaps," said his antagonist, "if you had not refused to lend me in my necessity, I might now aid you. What say you," said he, "shall we make a collection of a few dollars and give him as alms?"

This scornful laugh was echoed by the lookers-on. Pedastro threw a glance like a basilisk, first at Leonetz then at the scoffers round. Approaching him, he said—"I will stake my house, my land, my whole estate in the Faubourg St. Margny."

"Good," answered Leonetz.

In a few moments it was decided. Pedastro had lost all!

He sprung up, clenched his fists, and his eyes seemed starting from their sockets. No one regarded or spoke to him. The people dispersed, and the two antagonists were left alone. Pedastro moved from the spot where he stood and placed himself before Leonetz. There was something so deadly in the expression of his countenance that even his antagonist was startled. "I am a beggar," said he; "I have lost all I possess."

"Then you are just in the same situation I was a few nights ago," said Leonetz, with an insulting laugh.

Pedastro bit his lip. "Lend me," said he, "only the tenth part of the money you have won from me, that I may try my luck once more."

"What do you mean?" said Leonetz. "Have you forgotten that a winner is not expected to lend to a loser? No—no; borrow elsewhere, and I will give you a chance. But come, Pedastro, when am I to take possession of your house, or rather *mine*?"

"At this moment, if you choose," said Pedastro, with desperation. "It matters not to me whether I die in the street to-night or to-morrow."

"I will go with you, then," said Julian, placing a small pair of pocket pistols in his bosom.

Neither spoke on the way. When they arrived at the house, they entered a small parlour. Leonetz threw himself into an arm-chair. A lamp was burning on the table; by the side of it lay a rosary and a lady's glove.

"Ha!" exclaimed Leonetz, taking up the glove, "it seems fortune is not the only goddess you worship. There are great changes in a little time. This morning I was houseless—now it is your turn."

"Speak lower, for God's sake!" said Pedastro; "there is one whose heart may be broken."

"Ah, is it so!" exclaimed Leonetz. "Then you have human affections. They told me you had none. A love affair! You are not a married man, a *chère amie*? Well—well, you need not remove her to-night; she shall have her little luxuries. But come, old man, bring out a bottle of your best wine; you shall be my butler to-night. I will entertain you, and the lady into the bargain. Let us have her here."

"Wretch—wretch that I am!" exclaimed Pedastro. "Oh, have mercy on me! Give me one week to break this dreadful intelligence—to prepare her mind——"

"Poh!" interrupted Leonetz; "this is nonsense. No time like the present; now, this moment—this very moment," said he, rising.

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Pedastro, "thy justice is retributive!" then casting himself on the floor, he added, in a voice of anguish—"I kneel to you and beg for mercy—oh, not for myself; but there is one——"

At that moment the door was softly opened, and a young girl entered and rushed into Pedastro's arms. "My father—my father!" she exclaimed, "humble not yourself before this cruel, this hard-hearted man. I have heard what has just passed. Alas! the dreadful consequence of gaming has fallen heavily on us;—but you have not lost all—your daughter still remains to you. Let us quit this house—let him take his ill-gotten wealth. I will watch over you. Oh, father, we may yet be rich in virtue. Humble yourself no longer by imploring mercy. I have heard all. He has no affinity with human beings. Let us leave him—let us begone."

"My child—my child!" said Pedastro; "my poor Julia, I am penniless. Where can we go? We have not a place to lay our heads!" and he sank groaning on a chair.

Julia knelt down before him; she embraced his hands and bathed them with her tears. "Do not be thus cast down," said she. "Even now, at this dreadful price, I will think our experience cheaply won if——" and she stopped short; then again resumed—"You have been to me the kindest of fathers; now is the time for me to prove my gratitude. I can do much for our support; I can teach music and drawing. Cheer up, my

father; we may be happier, far happier than we have been for months."

Leonetz listened to her soft, low voice, as she strove to comfort her father; he gazed on her countenance and recognized the young girl he had seen in Levée street. His evil passions seemed quelled; he shrunk from himself; he spoke not—he moved not.

"Come, my father," said Julia, "let us leave this place;" and she caught his arm and sprang forward:

"Hear me!" exclaimed Leonetz, in an agitated voice. "I am not the wretch you think me; circumstances have made me appear what I do now. It is not in my nature to be so base. Do not quit this house—it is yours. I swear to you it shall be yours."

Pedastro seemed roused from his torpor. Vice has a thousand "scorpion whips" to inflict her stripes. A new and dreadful thought took possession of his mind. "Monster!" he exclaimed, "take all—all I have; grind me to powder—but dare not to lift your eye to my child—my blessed child!" and he gnashed his teeth in agony.

Julia turned towards him. "Fear not for me, father," said she; and she approached Leonetz and looked at him with a lofty and fearless expression. "There is a higher and more valuable possession than gold," added she; "it is an unsullied conscience—an uncorrupted heart. Keep what you have won; we ask nothing of you—we wish for no fellowship. And yet you are young, and I will not part without one word of warning. Oh, who shall speak it if I may not! Once before have I seen my father on the brink of ruin; but he had then resolution to stop short. I would implore you as a fellow-being to renounce this dreadful vice. Would to God I could speak to you with a warning voice that might sink deep into your heart."

"You have!" said Leonetz, solemnly. "I swear by all that is holy, I will never again touch a card! Take back," added he, addressing Pedastro, "all I have won from you!" and he laid his pocket-book on the table. "It is a free, unconditional restitution. I owe it to your daughter;—she has recalled me to honour and virtue."

"Are you serious?" said Pedastro, looking at him with astonishment.

"So help me Heaven!" exclaimed Leonetz. "I have no claims upon you, and yet, if I dared, I would annex one condition to this restitution," and he looked hesitatingly towards Julia.

"Speak," said she, with dignity.

"It is that you will immediately convey the whole of this estate to your daughter; give her a deed of it; put it beyond your own power to resume it, that such a time as this may never again arrive."

Pedastro could not refuse what might be made a condition. Leonetz, who seemed to have regained the impulses of his better days, would not quit him till the business was legally transacted. He then

approached Julia, and said, in a low voice—"Henceforth I renounce every species of gaming."

"God grant," she replied, "you may abide by your resolution. Farewell."

Pedastro could not believe his own senses. Any monstrous species of guilt or perjury from his fellow-man he was prepared for; but an act of generosity, a high or noble impulse was what he could not comprehend. He still suspected some counterplot lurking behind this most "*unnatural deed*," and he vowed that Julia should not be one moment from his sight. Gladly did this gentle and obedient child submit to the wearying, listless petulance of her father. If he was with her she knew he was safe—he was secure from the temptation of the gaming-table; and she had found from experience that his resolution was frail. Hour after hour she watched by his side, giving up even her favourite pursuits of drawing, music and books, because they were occupations in which he could take no share. The only alleviation she had was in the occasional visits of a young friend by the name of Morley. In early youth they had been school-mates, but his parents were wealthy and made high pretensions to rank and family. This, in New Orleans, is not so entirely nominal as in other parts of the United States. It must be remembered how lately this city came into our code of liberty and equality. Louisiana, under the French and Spanish dominion, nourished those feelings of aristocracy that belonged to the old countries. Morley, as he grew older, was separated from his little school-mate, and it was not till years after that, accidentally meeting her at the opera, his early impressions revived. From that time he had been a visitor at her father's house. The transaction which had taken place between Leonetz and Pedastro had never transpired, and Morley still continued to pass two or three evenings in the week by the side of Julia, listening to the music of her voice, which, whether she sung or spoke, always touched the chords of his heart. What at first had appeared to him a chimera, gaining his father's consent to unite himself with Pedastro's daughter, began now to appear plausible to him. The old man had no other connections but this beautiful girl; there was no vulgar train of brothers or sisters; he was old and could not live for ever, and then Julia, refined and accomplished as she was, would have not a single drawback. So reasoned the lover, but he determined not to communicate his hopes till he had consulted his father; he contented himself with weaving a web over them that bound both. Love needs no precise declaration. Julia gazed and trusted; she was little skilled in distinctions of rank; her life had been a retired one. She had no female companions, no little circle of visitors. Whether from necessity, accident or principle, Pedastro had scrupulously guarded her from association with others. Want of affection or want of inclination to gratify her could not have been his motive, for every means of accomplishment he had lavished upon

her with an unsparing hand. It was only by perseverance that Morley had obtained the right of a welcome guest, and not till Pedastro had well marked his deep and respectful interest in his daughter.

At length Morley's feelings became beyond the power of control, and he sought his father's presence and urged his suit with all the energy of his character. The father listened without an absolute prohibition; he stated objections that seemed to him insuperable, and these arose from the character of Pedastro. "I will, however," said he, "make proper inquiries and let you know the result."

It took but a short time for the elder Mr. Morley to make the investigation. The conclusion he drew from it was decisive. "I will not," said he to his son, "dwell on the character of Pedastro. That he is a gamester, &c., you know. He never could be admitted to our society."

"I know all this, sir," said Morley; "nor would I ask or desire it. You have proposed making me your agent; this will require my absence abroad; my wife will go with me, and Pedastro will be to you as if he never existed."

"Without replying to this proposal," said his father, "I must go on to mention an objection that, if I am not wholly deceived in your mind and character, will need no arguments to strengthen it."

"Speak, sir," said Morley, impatiently.

"It is contained in this paper," replied his father. "I leave it with you; it contains also a letter of unlimited credit on my banker at Paris. To-morrow the Juvenal sails; all things are arranged for your departure."

"You cannot think, sir," said the young man, "that any authority can be powerful enough to make me adopt such a measure?"

"No," replied his father; "*no authority*; but I am persuaded the paper will decide you. I leave it to your own free will, only requiring one condition—that if the objection appears to you insuperable, you will embark to-morrow morning in the Juvenal without any communication with Pedastro or his daughter."

"I may venture to promise this," said the son, with an ironical smile.

"Farewell, then," said his father; "all leaving-taking is best avoided. Write to me the earliest opportunity;" and he turned away.

The son opened the paper; he read it again and again. The next morning he was on his way to France.

When Julia heard of his departure it was an overwhelming blow. For months she drooped under it; her eye lost its brightness and her form its elasticity. Every morning she awoke with a weight of sorrow on her heart. She had no pleasant hopes or anticipations to look forward to; the bright and sunny season of youth remained, but dark and heavy clouds rolled over it.

There is nothing that has such a fatal influence upon the energy of the mind as disappointed affec-

tion. Julia became listless and selfish; she sat for hours without speaking. From this state she was aroused by a letter from Leonetz. It was written in language of deep respect, but informed her that her father was again in the habit of spending half his time at the gaming-table, and that unless he could be detached from these haunts ruin was the consequence. For the first time Julia complained to her father of ill-health; her pale cheek and heavy eye were sufficient testimony of the truth. She said she believed change of air might restore her, if he could so arrange his affairs as to pass a few months in traveling. He willingly consented, for he trembled for the only being he had ever loved. He proposed a sea voyage, but Julia shrunk from the proposal. She said she had an aversion to the sea. Perhaps her imagination connected her lover with its uncertain waves. They decided to try an inland voyage—to ascend the Mississippi and visit the western world. There was but little preparation necessary—no friends to bid farewell. In this varied and populous city, there was no one to say “God speed.” It was not strange that Pedastro should have been shunned—but his innocent, his unoffending daughter shared his lot! During the passage to Louisville in one of the commodious steamboats, her mind was occupied by the scenery that borders this mighty river. Its loneliness and sublimity calmed the tumult of her thoughts. Often, sitting on the deck, she gazed without any consciousness of herself; she listened to the water as it rushed impetuously along; she heard its deep hollow murmuring, its “evening roar,” and her thoughts went abroad from her own sense of wretchedness. Happy are those who have cultivated the highest and noblest powers of their nature! For their sorrow may come in its most trying forms; death may rob them of earthly treasures; calumny may blast a fair and innocent reputation, or the heart that loved and trusted may be betrayed—yet for all this there is comfort, a spring of living water in the beauty and sublimity of nature. Julia ceased to think of her own sorrows and disappointments. The luxuriant foliage, the plants and flowers which seemed rejoicing in their own beauty, all communicated tranquillity to her bosom. Again her smiles returned. She sometimes wondered she could be happy, but she felt that she was so—for God in his goodness has made virtuous effort its own reward. We talk of foreign climates, of the blue skies and bright suns of Italy—perhaps it were wiser to turn to the mild and invigorating atmosphere of our western world. Who that has traveled through the rapidly growing towns, or has followed the Ohio in its wanderings, at a time when our northern states have put on their mantle of snow, does not realize that America contains in her own bosom that variety of climate adapted to the constitutions and diseases of its inhabitants. At least, so thought Julia as she visited this most interesting part of our country. Her health became confirmed and her prospects once more brightened. Her father was withdrawn from

the snares that had surrounded him. She was sanguine that the spell was broken, and she felt the energy and enthusiasm that affection gives to the mind, and fondly believed she could be his guardian angel. After passing eight months on this excursion, they once more returned to New Orleans. In the meantime, Leonetz had persevered in his resolution of repairing no more to the gaming-table. His professional habits again returned; he became industrious and regular in his business; but Julia's image never left him; the low, soft music of her voice was constantly in his ear. A new passion took possession of his heart—it was love. For months he struggled against it. When he thought of Pedastro as a father-in-law, his pride shrunk from the alliance, and for a moment he hoped he might obtain his daughter on less honourable terms; but when his mind recurred to the daughter, he even doubted whether she would accept his *offered hand*. There was a dignity, a loftiness in her character that made him feel his own inferiority. At length, however, he resolved to make the trial, and with an ingenuousness that could not but interest, urged his suit. Julia shrunk from the proposal; she confessed her want of confidence. “I have reason,” said she, “to tremble at the infatuation that belongs to gaming.”

To Pedastro Leonetz appealed, and her father became his advocate. He represented to her that Leonetz's conduct had been eventually generous and noble, that “when a man was willing to marry a woman there could be no doubt but he respected her.”

Julia felt the deepest mortification at the manner in which her father urged his cause. “I cannot doubt his respect,” said she, “or that of any other person, while I do nothing to forfeit it.”

“My poor child,” said Pedastro, with unusual feeling, “you know little of the world, what contempt it may pour upon the innocent. At least, see Leonetz; give him a fair hearing, and do not decide rashly.”

There is a charm in youthful affection to which few are insensible. Leonetz had experienced a renovation of character and habits; his countenance had recovered its clear and animated expression; his former friends were happy to show how sincerely they rejoiced in his recovered virtue—all this had its weight with Julia; but the most insidious flattery was the power she possessed over him. He had renounced gaming for her sake; he was again animated by high pursuits; again his fine accomplishments were cultivated; his portfolio was again crowded with beautiful specimens of his execution in drawing. Insensibly his own claims, with her father's insinuations, operated upon her mind, and she began to feel an increasing interest. Leonetz perceived the yielding of her heart, and urged his suit with renewed impetuosity. At length, with a doubting and half-assured faith, she consented to become his wife. Their marriage was to be private;—neither the father nor intended husband spoke of bridal pomp. Julia had always

lived in solitude, and she was contented to remain so. Months passed away, and if she was not happy under her engagement, she was cheerful. It must be confessed that she often saw traits in Leonetz's character that made her tremble. His passions were violent and undisciplined, yet to her he was gentle and kind, and she tried to be satisfied with her lot. But a new calamity awaited her. Her father's health began to decline, the powers of his mind became enfeebled; he was restless and unhappy, and constantly demanded cards. It now seemed to be a virtue in Leonetz to devote his evenings to the miserable and bed-ridden old man. They played for low stakes; but poor Julia saw that the spirit of gambling was not extinguished. The flushed cheek, the fiery eye was there, and often altercation took place.

The evening arrived that preceded the day on which the marriage was to take place. Leonetz was all animation, Julia placid and resigned—but to a keen observer she would have appeared more like a victim than a bride. She gazed on her father with a melancholy tenderness, that seemed to tell the history of her life. He, too, discovered unwonted gentleness of manner. That evening was one of harmony, and for the first time for many weeks cards were not called for. The high and elevated character of Julia seemed to have diffused its influence over all. In the morning she entered as usual her father's chamber at an early hour. His attendant lay sleeping on a couch. She softly approached the bed. What a sight for an affectionate daughter! He lay cold and motionless. Death had claimed his victim just at the crisis when he was on the point of witnessing what he had so fervently desired—the honourable marriage of his daughter.

We will not dwell on the sorrow of Julia; perhaps it will find but little sympathy. Yet to her he had been a tender father;—she had shut her eyes upon his obvious defects while living; now he was gone, she remembered him only as the dearest and best of friends.

Weeks passed, and then months, and though Leonetz was still a devoted lover, he said nothing of their marriage. At first, Julia felt grateful for this attention to her feelings. At length, however, it struck her as strange, and suspicion began to creep into her mind. She had been robbed of that touching confidence that belongs to youth; her affections had been cruelly trifled with, and even her father had helped to destroy her reliance on human resolution. It was not long before her eye detected an evident change in Leonetz's appearance. The first morning they met in Levée street forcibly recurred to her mind. But she had no one to whom she could communicate her fears, and she determined to watch and pray in silence, firmly resolved that nothing should induce her to unite her fate with that of a gamester.

That Leonetz had gradually resumed this destructive habit was too true. For a while his attachment to Julia had superseded it, but now the

love of play became supreme. Every new adventurer with well-filled pockets was an object of interest. Such a one appeared at the famous gambling house in ——— street. Leonetz and the stranger were drawn towards each other by mutual interests. They played night after night. The fluctuations of fortune were at first alternate, but Leonetz, who always grew rash and violent in proportion as his luck diminished, at last found himself deeply involved.

That night when he quitted the gaming-table, the thought first occurred to him that he might, by securing to himself the fortune he had relinquished to Julia, not only relieve himself from his debts, but, by a tolerable run of luck, which he had now *every right to expect*, be able to double, nay, treble the original sum. It was a disagreeable business, to be sure, to undertake; he dreaded the gaze of her mild and thoughtful eye; but it was a last resource, and he determined to venture on it.

"My dear Julia," said he, with tenderness, "has not time enough been given to grief that cannot restore the dead? Will you not fulfil your promise to me, sanctioned by the approbation of your father? Say, dearest, when may I call you mine?"

There is something in tones of tenderness that speaks directly to the desolate heart. The respectful mention of her father was always grateful to Julia, and she replied with that gentleness that is in itself consenting.

As Leonetz poured forth his thanks, she said—"My dear friend, I have waited for a moment of confidence like this, to tell you of the distressing fears that have harassed my mind. Let me not offend you by my sincerity—but I have missed the fair and open brow; there have been wrinkles gathering here," said she, laying her hand on his forehead. "Tell me truly, what has perplexed you? Do not fear to speak to your true friend."

A deep glow passed over the face of Leonetz, and the struggle was violent between honourable and ignoble feeling; but it is easier to keep the downward path than ascend. "You are right, Julia," said he; "I have perplexities—pecuniary perplexities—though temporary, they are embarrassing. If I could raise a small sum, it would at once relieve me. I have foolishly entered into speculation, which, though judicious in itself, and what will inevitably in the end secure us a fortune, must now either be given up at a great loss or I must raise a few thousands."

"Is there no plan," said Julia, "that you can devise to relieve yourself from this emergency? I recollect people coming to my father to hire money."

"Yes," said Leonetz; "but he never let it without security—without a mortgage of house or land; and I have none."

"But I have," said Julia, eagerly; "house and land that you might have claimed as your own. Why not raise the sum you want on this security?"

"You forget, dear Julia," said Leonetz, "that it stands in your own name."

"True," replied she; "but if I destroy my title to it and make it over to you as a just debt, it will stand as it did before, won't it? I know but little of business."

"Nothing would induce me," said Leonetz, "to consent to such a measure but the conviction that it is as much for your interest as mine;" and he at the moment was sincere—for vice is ingenious in blinding her votaries.

"I will go and bring the papers," said Julia, rising.

With a hasty step she entered her father's room; directly opposite the door hung his picture. The sight of it seemed to occasion a revulsion in her thoughts. She stood for a moment, then slowly returned to Leonetz.

"Already back," said he, as she entered; "well may they picture love with wings."

One glance at her countenance and figure appalled him; the confiding, trusting expression was gone. She looked calm, dignified and solemn—just as he saw her the memorable night when they first met under the same roof.

"I have returned without the papers. It is not for myself I hesitate," added she; "it is for *you*. I would give you time to *reflect*—to recall this arrangement. Leonetz, I have been cruelly deceived. Deceive me not again."

"I swear!" said he.

"Oh, do not swear!" exclaimed she, shuddering; "do not swear. Take this key of my father's secretary; it contains the papers. His picture hangs opposite;—look well at it, Leonetz. Oh, what a lesson is there!"

That night Leonetz repaired to the gaming-table confident of success. The stranger met him as usual. They played all night and late into the next day—but day and night were the same; the window-shutters were closed and the bright and glorious sun was excluded.

There was one more desperate adventure, and then Leonetz, starting up and clenching his hands, exclaimed, with a frightful oath—"I have lost all—all!—house, land—all—all! I can play no longer!"

The stranger seemed to have waited for this acknowledgment; his manner changed from the rapacious gamester to the man of the world. "Say not so," said he; "you have still a fortune left."

"What do you mean?" said Leonetz.

"Your pretty brunette is a fortune," replied the stranger. "I would set all I have won against her. What is her name?"

"Do you mean Mademoiselle Pedastro?" said Leonetz.

"Ay," replied he; "it is her Christian name I want."

"Julia," replied Leonetz.

"Well, then, I will set twenty thousand dollars against Julia. Do you accept the stake?"

"You rave," said Leonetz; "I am to marry her next week."

"Poh!" replied his antagonist; "we all know what this means. You will be well off to be quit with twenty thousand dollars."

"Indeed," said Leonetz, "you mistake; she is virtue and truth itself."

"You do not mean to marry her?" said the stranger.

"I *do*," said Leonetz, "so help me God!"

The stranger's eye flashed with unwonted fire. "Is there no secret history attached to her?" asked he.

"It matters not," said Leonetz; "I love and honour her."

"Twenty thousand dollars is no trifle to set against a name!" exclaimed the stranger, holding up a handful of bills.

Leonetz took up the cards and shuffled them. "If I were disposed," said he, "to accept your proposal, it is only a quit-claim I could give you. She is at her own disposal."

"I understand all that," replied his opponent.

"Well, then," said Leonetz, "I accept your proposal on this condition—that Julia shall decide between us. I promise to make no claim if I lose; and if she prefers you I will abide by her decision."

An exulting smile curled his upper lip. "Be it so," said the stranger.

They shuffled and cut.

"She is mine," said the stranger, rising; "Julia is mine. You have lost all and I have won!"

"Her decision still remains," said Leonetz; "we are to abide by that."

From the gaming-house they repaired to Julia's abode. At Leonetz's earnest solicitation, his companion permitted him to see her a few moments alone and give his explanation. This he did in an imperfect and confused manner. Julia saw that some mysterious transaction had taken place—what, she could not comprehend. Leonetz said there was one waiting without; she must decide between them—that she knew *his* faithfulness, *his* affection; that he trusted to hers!

At that moment the door of the room opened and the stranger entered. One glance was sufficient for Julia—it was Morley! "Julia, my own Julia!" he exclaimed, "I have come to claim you—you are mine!" and he knelt at her feet and clasped his arms around her.

Alas! who will condemn her that for a moment she forgot everything but her first and only love, and leant her forehead on his bosom?

Leonetz saw with terror the yielding of her soul; he more than suspected the nature of the scene, and that he had been the dupe of Morley. "Julia!" exclaimed he, "will you exchange an honourable marriage for the protection this man will offer you? He does not mean to marry you; he scorns your alliance. There is a secret attached to your birth; he knows it—he will not marry you. I promised your father I never would reveal it to you. I never

should but for this crisis. Julia, you are a *quadrone*!"

She gazed from one to the other, apparently without comprehension. At length the dreadful truth seemed to rush upon her mind. She listened in silence to their protestations and explanations. It was doubtful how much she gathered from their confused narratives. At length she said, in a low, faint voice, pressing her hands upon her heart as if to still its throbbing—"You must both leave me—you must go, if you do not wish to see me die at your feet."

"Not till you have decided!" exclaimed Morley. "Oh, Julia, for your sake I have come back; I could not live without you! For your sake I have frequented the low haunts of the gaming-table, that I might win you honourably from this man."

"Honourably!" exclaimed she, shuddering. "Go—go, while I have breath to ask it."

"When will you decide between us?" said Leonetz.

"In a few days," replied she, "I will send to you. Come not near me till then. I must have time; I must have thought. Promise me, both of you, that you will not come near me till I send to you?"

They both reiterated their promise and quitted the house.

Day after day elapsed and no message reached them from Julia. The interest this unfortunate girl excited where her caste was despised, was a proof of the power of intellect and virtue. Both Morley and Leonetz waited with trembling impatience for a summons. At length it arrived, just one week from the time they had left her. On a small slip of paper was written and sent to both:—

"At seven o'clock come to my house this evening. JULIA PEDASTRO."

The clock had scarcely struck the hour before both of the rivals appeared—both confident of success. Leonetz trusted to her high and honourable principle—Morley to her affection. "If I can obtain her by no other means," thought he, "I will marry her. Her father, the old Pedastro, is already

* It is well known that some of the most beautiful and accomplished women are among this rejected caste.

forgotten by the world. At any rate, she shall be mine. I defy the powers of heaven or earth to tear her from me."

They both met together in the *entre-sol*—these two worthless rivals, on whom the fate of the pure and high-minded Julia seemed now to depend. They cast fiery and indignant glances at each other, but neither spoke. The waiting woman of Julia at length appeared and silently motioned them to follow her. She passed through the outer apartment into a room lighted by wax tapers. In the centre stood a bier, and on it lay extended the pale and emaciated form of the heart-broken girl, dressed in the ceremonies of the grave. Leonetz started back; a sentiment of horror took possession of his mind. It would seem that he best understood the strength and depth of Julia's character. Morley rushed forward, exclaiming—"What mummery is this? Julia, my own Julia, speak to me!"

"Alas! sir," said the weeping attendant, "she is dead; she will never speak again. She died this morning at eight o'clock."

"Impossible!" said Morley; "I received a summons from her to come this evening."

"Yes, sir; she left two notes in my care to be sent immediately after her death."

"We have destroyed her," said Leonetz to Morley, calmly, but desperately. "It is *your* work, and your life or mine must pay the forfeit."

"I care not how soon," replied Morley; "I will meet you at any hour you name."

"She has been sick a long while," said the attendant, sobbing. "We all thought she had taken the consumption, but she never gave up till about a week ago—the very morning you two gentlemen were here. She was seized with fainting fits after your departure and carried to her bed, and she never rose from it afterwards. Yesterday she seemed stronger, and told me to bring her *escritoire*; she was bolstered up in bed and wrote the *two notes*, charging me to deliver them when she was no more."

The sequel of our tale may be conjectured. The two young men met at the dawn of morning. Morley aimed with a passionate and unsteady hand and failed. Leonetz was more successful—his antagonist fell, shot through the heart.

A TRAGI-COMEDY.

I.

IT was a very great effort. The orchestra had just finished Beethoven's "Hope" when Bernard Devir stepped forward, with a bow he had practised for several weeks at intervals, and unrolled a manuscript. His collar was high and uncomfortable, and the rose in the buttonhole of his shining black coat made him feel the stiffness that always afflicts the male sex when over-decorated.

His father and mother, in the third row of benches from the platform, felt that the eyes of the assembly were upon them. They sat very straight, and Mr. Devir, as a relief for his nervousness, smoothed his new silk hat with his handkerchief. The room was warm; there was a flutter of fans, a scent of June roses from the nosegays; not a breath of air was stirring; a man, utterly without a soul, on the back bench, had snored during John Dempsey's impassioned parallel (thirty-six pages of fools-cap) between Mohanmed and Arius. Even his grace, who sat in an arm-chair on the platform, surrounded by several of the reverend clergy, had been observed to hold his hand before his

mouth during the lengthy but eloquent essay on "Grattan as a Patriot," and while Dick Weldon was making a beautiful apostrophe of five pages to the Italian republics in his "Examination of the Genius of Machiavelli" something like a look of gentle melancholy was seen to steal across the face of his grace, which deepened as Dick rustled twenty more leaves, written on both sides. Everybody, except the dignified personages on the platform, looked eagerly at Bernard Devir when he appeared. His father thought it was the halo of genius on his son's brow that attracted this attention; his mother thought it was his personal beauty: how nice he looked in his high collar, with his hair plastered in a hyacinthine half-circle on his forehead, and a thin, reddish down visible on his upper lip in a certain light—how superior to that sallow-faced South American who had preceded him, in broken English, with a paper on "Arctic Expeditions"! Mrs. Devir waved her palm-leaf fan and felt that she was indeed blessed. She did not know that this noticeable eagerness was due to the fact that the audience was trying, with all its failing mental strength, to guess how many pages were bound up in the valedictorian's manuscript.

It was a fine effort. He opened with a quotation which prepared his auditors for something entirely original. "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*," he said, and then he began an examination of "Free Thought and its Relations to the Poetry of the Renaissance in Italy."

"*Rheni pacator*," he exclaimed, "*et Istri*
Omnis in hoc uno variis discordia cessit
Ordinibus; lætatur eques, plauditque senator,
Votoque patricio certant plebeia favori."

These words sent a thrill through the hearts of the father and mother of the valedictorian. With one accord they turned their eyes towards his grace to see how they affected him. He was engaged in wiping his forehead with a purple silk handkerchief. Mrs. Devir wondered how anybody could think of such a trivial thing at this awful moment.

The valedictorian descended into English. He cast long, lingering glances into the past; he prophesied of the future; he talked to Mr. Gladstone in a way that no man with any respect for himself ought to stand; he fearlessly told Prince Bismarck what he thought of him; he raised Erin from her prostrate state and told her how she ought to behave herself; he quoted "Let Erin remember the Days of Old." This brought out a vol-

ume of applause, and the first violin, suddenly awakened and fancying that the end had come, played the opening bar of the waltz in the "Merry War."

The valedictorian went on, however; he give a sketch of Darwin, and then, soaring upward, told why Raphael had included Dante among the theologians of the church in a famous picture; he castigated the pagan spirit of the Renaissance with fury, and, coming down to modern life, gave Swinburne a blow that almost moved his mother to remonstrate.

"Sure, Terence," she whispered to her husband, "he's very, very hard on that wan."

"Whoever he is, he deserves it," answered that good man. "Barney knows what he's talking about."

"But I think he's making very free with the pope."

It became plain even to Mrs. Devir that her son was attacking Alexander Pope, and not Pope Alexander. The rolling of a cart outside obliged the orator to pause, and for an instant nearly everybody felt as if gentle dew had fallen from heaven. He dropped Pope and grappled with Lorenzo the Magnificent. Six pages were turned, while all watched him in silent suspense. Suddenly, with lowered voice, he addressed his classmates as "dear companions of his scholastic pursuits," and when he got to "your right reverend prelate and reverend clergy, whose presence here, etc., etc.," the first violin laid his bow on the strings; but when he said, "If in the dim vista of the future, hidden from us by wisest dispensation, we meet together, perhaps crowned by Fame and made the elect of her temple, with tear-dimmed eyes we shall look back on the roseate, studious, and tranquil hours spent in the sylvan shades of our Alma—" the first violin could restrain himself no longer: the strains of the "Merry War" rang out, and a weak, small voice was heard to murmur, "Deo gratias!" The breeze seemed to stir up suddenly; tired nature was at once restored; the man on the back bench awoke for the fifth time, to find happiness all around him. His grace smiled most benevolently, shook hands with Bernard, and said kind things to everybody. All the graduates, adorned with medals and loaded with gilded books, were presented to him. All was joy, congratulations, wilted roses, perspiration, and expectation of luncheon.

There were no happier people in the crowd than the Devirs. Mrs. Devir put on her well-kept broché shawl, which Bernard held for her, and fastened the big round cameo brooch with ceremony at her throat. It was the happiest moment of her

life, for his grace had just said to Bernard, "It was a fine effort." Bernard kissed her, and gave the precious manuscript, tied with blue ribbons, into her keeping.

Jack Dempsey, now B.A., elbowed his way through the crowd and shook Bernard's hand, noticing, with a pang—for he was an orphan—the proud, tender look in the eyes of Bernard's mother.

"That composition of yours knocked us all cold," said Jack Dempsey heartily; he wanted to say something complimentary. Mrs. Devir started. Was this the young orator who had a short time ago grandiloquently discoursed on Grattan—a scholar who wore a medal and who could quote Latin? "We needed cooling," continued the unconscious Jack. "I am glad I'm done with the whole business."

Mrs. Devir's horrified attention was drawn from the free-and-easy young Bachelor of Arts to a slight, pretty girl who came towards them, bearing a big nosegay with the regulation lily over-topping it. She smiled, showing two rows of dazzling teeth.

"Mother sent this for Bernard," she said, "but I couldn't get it to him."

"Thank you, Marie," said Mrs. Dempsey a trifle stiffly. Bernard was out of college now, and intended for the highest vocation in life, and Mrs. Devir was anxious to guard him from all possible danger.

"They are too late now, Monsieur Bernard."

"Pas du tout, mademoiselle," said Bernard, with a slight blush and a bow. "I will take a rose and keep it, and you will keep the rest."

"D'ye mind that, now?" murmured Mr. Devir, nudging his wife. "There's more learned in college than Latin."

Mrs. Devir did mind it. Even her son's readiness in French did not reconcile her to it. Jack Dempsey was not slow to claim a rose, too, which Marie Regnier gave him with a pretty blush.

"She's a bold piece!"

Mr. Devir did not hear this; an acquaintance of his from the same place in Ireland was pouring into his ear encomiums on Bernard's "effort."

Marie Regnier, with a parting smile which included the whole group, retired very modestly, and Mrs. Devir, relieved, took Bernard's arm to walk to the station.

By this time Bernard had said good-by to half a hundred peo-

ple, and the precious manuscript had been given to a reporter, who had no intention of having it printed, but who did not want it to fall into the hands of a rival. This tribute of the Press to Genius was very grateful to Mrs. Devir. The next morning, when she seized the early newsman at half-past four A.M. and found only six lines of it in the *Herald* (and all the Latin left out!), she felt that the art of printing was a delusion and a snare.

Jack Dempsey's eyes had rested with longing and sympathy on Mrs. Devir as she stood so proudly at her son's side; it was beautiful to see her, but she was by no means beautiful. She was a thin, worn-looking woman, with faded blue eyes, and features sharpened by care and hard work. There were two deep, upright lines on her forehead, and her hands, encased in large mitts, were wrinkled and knotted at the joints. She wore a gala bonnet decorated with two small blue cabbages and a bunch of cherries, a rusty black silk gown which had been packed away carefully after each family festival and holiday for many years, and her cherished red broché shawl of the palm-leaf pattern.

Her husband was wrinkled and stooped, too. He had a keen blue eye and a stern mouth; a fringe of white whiskers ran all around under his chin; his broadcloth frock-coat hung uneasily on him, and his trousers, also broadcloth, were rather white and baggy at the knees—naturally, since he had knelt in them at Mass for more Sundays than any pair of trousers not embalmed carefully every Monday morning until the following Sunday can endure.

"Go forth, young men," the eloquent person who had delivered the address to the graduates had said—"go forth; use the gift of tongues your Alma Mater has given you to enlighten them that sit in darkness. You will adopt professions, and perhaps rise to eminence in those professions; but in the midst of opulence, adulation, if Fame should herald one of you as the poet of the age, the Virgil of our time; if one of you should gain the highest prizes of statesmanship; if one of you should scale the heights of military glory, which, unfortunately, leads but to the grave—remember the Alma Mater that cherished your high aspirations, guided your steps aside from the 'primrose path of dalliance,' and will ever crown your highest ideals with her blessing, until you are at last dazzled by that fierce, white light which beats around the Throne. Vale et ave!"

And so they went forth. A stranger, hearing all that had been said, might have imagined the world was longing to crown

them with bays or to put them on triumphal shields, or that they had been furnished such an equipment as princes and barons in older days gave the young servitors of their household when the time for the conferring of knighthood had come. It seemed strange to go out into the sunny, every-day atmosphere and find that the world was not standing still. The railroad conductor collected tickets from Bernard Devir and Jack Dempsey without any apparent consciousness that he touched hands that had penned the essay on "Grattan as a Patriot" and that fine effort, "Free Thought and its Relations to the Poetry of the Renaissance in Italy." But for one woman the world was transformed. Mrs. Devir had suffered and toiled. One by one her children had passed away. For this one—the pride and hope of her soul—she had worked like a slave. To see him serving the altar was the desire of her life. To-day it seemed very near to her. If she might be permitted to live to see her son say his first Mass, she could, with all her heart, join in the prayer of the holy Simeon.

It was the happiest day of her life. Jack Dempsey, careless, free-and-easy Jack, looked at her wrinkled hands and sighed. What a glory it was to have a mother! He laughed and joked, kissed his hand out of the car-window right and left; but, for all that, he missed none of the tender, prideful glances that the worn, tired woman cast upon her son. Jack, in his heart, felt sad; it seemed to him that a mother's love is born to suffer—of all earthly things the nearest to heaven, yet of all earthly things most pathetic in its disappointments.

"He's a gay blade," said Mr. Devir.

"There's no thought about him at all," answered Mrs. Devir as Jack Dempsey bade them good-by. "They say his uncle wants to make a priest of him. He'll never do it!"

II.

That essay on "The Relations of Free Thought to the Poetry of the Italian Renaissance" was the result of many days of toil and many nights of anxiety—of early rising on cold winter mornings and late working on sultry summer evenings. It was like one of those gorgeous blooms that show on prickly and ugly cactus plants. The rough plant endures, in those regions where it flourishes, storms of dust and thousands of scorching rays from the sun; but when the flower, yellow and vermillion, appears, it, doubtless forgets the dust and the sun. The toil and the trouble

of producing that essay had not fallen upon Bernard. He had known where to find the material for it, and he had put it together. The bricks (to drop into metaphor) were the traditional property of college orators; he had only supplied the mortar. The real work of forcing the flamboyant exotic had been done by his father and mother.

To bring forth the flower—which was supposed to represent the result of four years of college culture—Mr. and Mrs. Devir had gone to market before dawn and stood behind the little grocery-shop near the Bowery for many weary years. It was one of Mrs. Devir's boasts that during this time they had never had a bottle of whiskey in their establishment. Customers who would not buy unless they were "treated to a sip" behind the screen might go elsewhere. The "old man" was more lenient, but his wife was firm.

Bernard had been kept at school, and "held up his head with the rest there." His clothes had been as good as those of Jack Dempsey, whose uncle was a great Wall Street millionaire. Spending-money had not been grudged to him, and he had been advised to entertain his friends at a down-town restaurant on the unfrequent holidays when he had leave of absence from college. Mrs. Devir flattered herself that she was a woman of the world; she said that the ways of Bernard's friends were not her ways, and she wouldn't shame the boy by having him bring his friends, with their Latin, and their Greek, and their French, into the back-room of a grocery-shop.

Bernard would not have cared, if there had been a billiard-table in that little back-room; it would have been jammed on holidays with the young persons of culture whom Mrs. Devir would have delighted to honor. His quarterly bills for tuition and books had been promptly met; his subscriptions to the various college schemes had always been "decent." Sometimes it required sharp pinching to do all this and avoid drawing on the sum deposited in the "Emigrant's." And Mr. Devir was strongly tempted to introduce the black bottle behind the screen for such of his female customers as were afflicted with "goneness" or "sudden palpitations," with a view of increasing sales; but Mrs. Devir, true to her principles, would not hear of it.

Bernard had been graduated with honor. His parents felt that they had given him what was to be his fortune—an education. They had never had much learning; Mr. Devir could write his own name, and Mrs. Devir could make her mark. They both had an unbounded reverence for "education"—that won-

derful gift which was "more than a mint of money to any poor boy"; they had been coining their lives into the education which had culminated on Commencement Day in that fine effort, "The Relations of Free Thought to the Poetry of the Italian Renaissance."

This education was to be the key with which he was to open the treasures of the world. His parents rated it at the value of the sacrifices they had made. His mother had resolved that he should be a priest, and his father, in the beginning more worldly and hoping to see him in the Assembly some day, like Dennis Rooney's son, had finally come to regard it as settled that Bernard should, when the time came, go up for examination for the seminary.

In the meantime there was a vacation before him. He had worked hard; his mother felt that he, with his stores of Greek and Latin and his wonderful accomplishments, ought not to be confined to the grocery-store or its little back-room.

"He'd look nice rolling up his sleeve and diving into the brine-barrel for mackerel!" she whispered to her husband as she watched Bernard, who was talking to a classmate in the seat before them, "or selling a bunch of garlic to one of the Italians."

"It's no worse than his father did before him," responded her husband.

Mrs. Devir looked at him as an æsthete of the most intense cult sometimes gazes at a hopeless Philistine. She felt that there are some things which a man ought to know without having them told to him; and, as most women do some time or other, whatever the cynics may say, she showed her sense of the impregnable stupidity of her better-half by silence. This is a medium, by the way, very expressive in the hands of women, because it is so seldom used.

She arranged, in her mind, that Bernard should not spend much time in the store, which was no place for him. He should go to some aristocratic sea-side resort, if she had to draw something from the "Emigrant's Industrial." It would not do to have him wasting his time in the store. The father and she were used to the little place and to the ways of the neighborhood. But how could Bernard, in his frock-coat and white shirt, endure it? No; he must go, as it were, from the college to the seminary without any interregnum of the store.

Before they had reached home Mrs. Devir had settled it all with her husband. It was decided that Bernard should start on

the next day for Far Rockaway. There, as Mrs. Devir said, he would "meet the society of his equals" and recuperate after his studies.

Mr. Devir shook his head dubiously. His vanity was somewhat wounded by the open preference his wife showed for his son; he had worked for him like a slave, but not that he might be placed so far above him. Now, Mrs. Devir, being a woman, had no vanity of her own; all her qualities, all her foibles, seemed to be absorbed in her son.

III.

Far Rockaway is a very lively sea-side place in the summer. There are cottages and hotels, and much music in the morning and evening. All the popular airs are played on all sorts of pianos by the accomplished young ladies that frequent the place in time of *villeggiatura*. There is lawn tennis, sailing, bathing, and fishing. Dancing, too, is a favorite amusement.

Bernard Devir met Jack Dempsey in this festive town, and they had a good time. Bernard indulged in all the amusements of the place, which would have included a flirtation with the most forward of the three Misses Clarke, the belles from Syracuse; but their mother, hearing that he was a "student," put an end to that with virtuous indignation.

There was little time for thought; and Bernard gave small consideration to his future until one day, when he and Jack Dempsey were out sailing, Jack said:

"Are you going up for the examination?"

"I suppose so," Bernard answered carelessly. "Those fellows in that boat have an immense load of blue-fish—I suppose so; the old folk want me to."

Jack was silent for a moment. Bernard, watching the fortunate man in the bow of the other boat haul in another fish, forgot the subject.

"Well, Bernard," continued Jack, "if that is the way you feel about it you'd better give the idea up. I'm not much of a preacher; but I'll say to you I'd rather cut off my right hand than go into that seminary in that way."

Jack's face flushed. Bernard smiled.

"You're awfully in earnest." And then, with a touch of seriousness himself, "What can I do? I can construe Virgil a little; but I haven't any money to keep me while I grind at law or medicine. You know I am a thoughtless fellow, Jack—I

know I am—but I have come to the conclusion that I can't have the old people working for me any longer."

"I'd go into the grocery-store first."

Bernard laughed. The suggestion was too absurd.

During the few days that followed Bernard did think; and, more, he prayed. He was glad when the last day of his vacation at Far Rockaway came.

Supper was waiting in the little back-room of the grocery-store when he arrived at home. He went behind the counter and kissed his father, to the admiration of several waiting customers. He found his mother in her seat at the neatly-spread table. The soft light of the glittering kerosene lamp showed her how brown he had become. She clasped him to her in fond pride, and called to her husband to leave the store in charge of the "boy."

Bernard was waited upon like a young prince who had honored an humble roof by his presence. His father even offered him a cigar out of the best box, apologizing for it. The parents listened with pleasure to all Bernard had to say.

"They'll never make a priest out of that Jack Dempsey," said his mother, as that young man's name was mentioned.

"There's more chance for him than for me, mother. He feels that he has a vocation, while I—I can't go in for the examination, that's all."

The silence was unbroken. Mrs. Devir set down her teacup and looked at her son. Mr. Devir took his pipe out of his mouth.

"What did you say, Barney?" she asked tremulously.

"I'm not worthy to be a priest, mother, and I can't try."

"Not worthy!" cried Mrs. Devir. "You're joking! And you, with all your beautiful education and all the prayers that's been said for you!"

"I can't help it, mother. God knows it almost breaks my heart to tell you the truth. But I can't think of it, mother—I can't. I know it's the best thing, the highest, the holiest thing, on this earth to be a priest of God; but it's a very hard thing to be a good priest, and I haven't the vocation, mother."

Bernard said all this rapidly. He felt as if a weight had been lifted off his heart when he had spoken.

"That Marie Regnier has bewitched the boy," cried Mrs. Devir bitterly, speaking out a hasty thought and then regretting it at once when she saw the look of pain on her son's face.

"Mother!"

Mrs. Devir could no longer lift the teacup to her lips. She

covered her eyes with her toil-worn hands, and tears trickled slowly between the wrinkled and knotted fingers. Her husband toyed nervously with his pipe. The boy in the store was whistling a careless tune. The lull of twilight had fallen even on the busy city. Bernard felt as if the whole world were reproaching him.

Where was his halo now? Where was the sunshine that a moment before had shone on him from the eyes of these two old people? His father seemed stunned; his mother, after a vain effort to restrain herself, burst into sobs.

And this was the end of it all? The end of the toiling, the hoping, the praying; the downfall of pride, which had been so great in this poor mother's heart that she would have become the humblest of the humble to gratify it!

After a time of silence, broken only by his mother's sobs and the whistling of the boy in the store, Bernard arose and took his father's hand, which lay limply on his knee. The old man seemed not to notice him; he did not turn his intent gaze from his wife. Bernard clasped the hand tighter. Surely his father, whose love would be less unreasonable than a woman's, could understand; but his father, with no eyes for anybody except the weeping mother, pushed him away.

Bernard's heart swelled. Suddenly his mother raised her head in sudden hope.

"You'll not make up your mind until you've seen Father Rodman at the church?"

"I have just come from him, mother."

Mrs. Devir's head sank again.

"You're breaking your mother's heart, you spalpeen!" cried his father, bringing his fist down upon the table. "Go up to bed! It would have been better a thousand times if I'd kept you in the store here, instead of cramming your head with Latin and Greek, of no manner of use if you're not to be priested. And I'll be ashamed of my life to face the neighbors!"

Bernard, no longer a boy, but a man, heavy of heart, crept up to bed. He did not dare to kiss his mother; she sank her head lower as he passed her. He threw himself on his knees at the side of the white-spread bed and was silent. He put his hands up towards the little picture of the Sacred Heart, which had hung there ever since he could remember; he could not pray, for all things, fraught with the tenderness of that mother whose broken voice he could hear from below, seemed to blame him.

What refuge was there for him? His father and mother had turned against him. "I will go down," he thought, in a burst of passion, "and I will tell her that I will do as she wishes; but I will wash my hands of it—the sacrilege will be upon her head."

Then another thought calmed him. "I cannot," he thought, "act the part of Pontius Pilate, even for my mother."

IV.

It was generally acknowledged among the neighbors and relatives of the Devirs that the "student" was a failure. To be intended for the seminary and to refuse to enter the seminary was a deep disgrace in the eyes of these good people. Mrs. Devir had talked of her son as a future priest ever since the boy had entered college. The humiliation was bitter. She could not say, as she had said in her many afflictions, "It is the will of God." She did not believe it was the will of God; it could not be the will of God that *her* son should not serve the altar. She still attended to Bernard's wants, but in cold silence. His father kept sternly quiet, too. One Saturday, when Bernard went into the store and tried to help in the work, his father roughly told him that he had no business there.

"It's my place, father," he said. "It's my turn to work now."

"We don't want Latin and Greek here. Your mother and me have done without help so long, we don't want it now."

Bernard went upstairs again, with bitterness in his heart. The food he ate almost choked him. He felt that he was a pauper; and, consciously or unconsciously, they made him feel it. There was little consolation in his books. He thumbed over his Cicero in the little, dark room, and copied the "Relations of Free Thought to the Poetry of the Italian Renaissance" and sent it to one of the magazines. It came back in a few days, accompanied by a slip of printed paper:

"The editor regrets that, owing to a press of manuscripts, he is obliged to return the enclosed."

He could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes. What! that "fine effort," which had been praised by everybody and applauded so cordially, returned to him, no doubt unread? His cup of humiliation was over-running.

The friends of his earlier boyhood who sat on the disused carts left in the street at nights, and sang songs, or practised dancing steps on the corners after the day's work, nodded when

he passed by. He was neither fish nor fowl in their estimation. He was invited to join the "Élite Chowder Club," which drove down to Coney Island in decorated wagons, with flaring torches and blaring horns, several times a year; and the well-written note of regret which he sent to the secretary procured him some temporary scrivener work at the time of election. That was the only work he succeeded in getting, although he answered hundreds of the newspaper advertisements. Nobody seemed to want him. He was too old to be taken as a learner of a trade. There were hundreds of young men who could construe Virgil in the same position as himself. People who could do "anything" were a drug in the market.

His best coat became white at the seams, and his trousers baggy at the knees. Mr. Devir said over and over again that *he* couldn't afford to keep a "dude." Mrs. Devir said nothing. His room was always neat and his food ready; but when it was necessary to speak to him she uttered only monosyllables.

It was a wretched life. The mother suffered as acutely as the son. It never occurred to her that she was not acting a virtuous part. It never occurred to the father that his son needed his assistance. Bernard had been richly and rarely educated. If he could not make his way in the world with this costly equipment he must be worthless. What could they—ignorant, hard-working people—do for him, except keep him in bread and butter?

The key to the Temple of Fame, of which the college orator had spoken so grandiloquently, would not open the meanest tenement. Around him he saw poor boys, who had been running of errands while he was declining *mensa*, cheerfully working, independent and prosperous.

In despair he plead for work on the wharves. He was laughed at; a stripling with white hands and soft muscles could not do a stevedore's work.

If he had not been a devout and earnest Catholic he would have sunk himself, his doubts, and his wretchedness in the East River. To be a burden on two old people; to eat the bread of idleness; to have no earthly hope! It was heart-breaking. Not only to be a burden, but to be, in the eyes of all, a failure and reproach! And then the utter impotence of being penniless! The bootblacks were better off than he; he could not have bought a box and brush.

Jack Dempsey had written from the seminary, preaching courage. On one of Bernard's gloomiest days, as he sat in his room scanning for the ten-hundredth time the advertisements in

the newspapers, his mother, silently as usual, brought him a letter. It was short. Bernard opened it; another piece of paper fell from its folds upon the floor.

"DEAR BOY: There is not much time allowed here for useless writing, so I will be brief. My cousin, Will Dempsey, has had a full account of you from me. He is a queer fellow, an old bachelor, you know, with plenty of 'chink.' He thinks he can make you useful down on his ranch in Texas, as he can't have me. Will you go? San Lorenzo Ranch, Medina County, Texas—make note of it. I enclose his check for expenses. I've been trying to bring this about for a long time. Hope you'll go, etc., etc."

Bernard clasped the letter and the check in his hand as a drowning man might catch at a spar. How good God was, after all! His heart went up in gratitude. He telegraphed his answer to Jack as soon as he cashed the check.

Mrs. Devir took Bernard's announcement of his early departure with apparent calmness. Mr. Devir's mouth twitched a little, and he evidently kept back some demonstration of affection, but he only said:

"Well, I can't say less than God bless you, though you've been a sore trial to me and your mother."

His mother carefully packed his valise and neglected nothing that might add to his comfort. But she would not remain alone with him; she would give him no chance for a tender word. When the time came for him to go he lingered in the doorway of the little room and whispered, "Mother." She was behind the counter waiting on Marie Regnier, who was a very thrifty seamstress in the little French colony around the corner. Bernard went out into the store. His mother turned her cheek coldly towards him. He touched it with his lips, and paused. She paid no further attention to him. And he, sad and desolate, left her.

There is no being on earth who can inflict more pain with a calm face than a good woman in the consciousness of her goodness.

Marie Regnier's eyes became misty. She understood the scene. With a sudden impulse she held out her hand and said:

"*Au revoir*, Monsieur Bernard. I pray that the good God and his Blessed Mother may keep you safe!"

Bernard could not speak; he tried to say "good-by." Mrs. Devir contracted her brows and darted a quick, jealous look at the girl.

She went to the door and watched him disappear. Once, when he turned back for a last look, she dodged hastily into the store. When she could see him no more she went up to her room and sobbed as if her heart would break, kissing over and over again a faded daguerreotype of a little boy. And yet she had let him go without a word of kindness. David, mourning for Absalom, probably forgot a son's transgressions. This mother mourned her son's obstinacy with bitter regret and a sense of deep injury. It was only when she saw him as a little boy that she could love him without feeling the humiliation of his failure.

Bernard had glanced back. He did not see his mother, but he saw Marie Regnier, looking very nice in the morning sunshine, waving her hand to him. It gave him some comfort, and he waved his in return; he could do no less. As he did it Hope seemed to spread her wings over him again.

V.

Jack Dempsey's cousin was a hale, hearty Tipperary man, a good Catholic and an ardent nationalist. There are some people who think that these qualities cannot be united, but they can. He had a comfortable adobe house on his ranch, which was well stocked with sheep. His family consisted of a dozen small dogs and a formidable array of revolvers. The first warned him of the approach of tramps; the second proved useful when the tramps arrived with hostile intent.

He was a bachelor of fifty-five, erect as a dart, ruddy as a winter apple, with side-whiskers as white as the wool on a sheep's back at shearing-time, and clear blue eyes that bulged out a little to show that nothing escaped them.

He received Bernard cordially. He said frankly that he liked his looks. He put him at the roughest work he could, "to take the starch out of him," and Bernard worked with all his might. It was good to get out among the mesquite, in the soft, dry air, and to know that at last he was of use in the world, although he was earning only a ranchman's wages and eating a ranchman's rations.

After a time old Will Dempsey and Bernard became friends. Bernard acquired some new tricks in the making of corn-bread and the cooking of beef that warmed the heart of old Will, who had never had much skill in the culinary line. He soon knew Bernard's story; for the two had many a long smoke and talk

by the fire in the chilly time of the year. He smiled when Bernard alluded to Marie Regnier's leave-taking, and, much to Bernard's surprise, warned him solemnly that he was "very young." At this time Bernard could not see the drift of this. Old Will rarely talked of himself; he seemed to find little interest in any subject outside of Irish politics and the affairs of the ranch. Once, smiling at a letter he had gotten recently, he told Bernard an episode in his life. When he was prospecting in Mexico, or rather searching for one of those mines said to have been worked by the Indians before the coming of the Spaniards, he had had a partner named Marianno Galdez—"a greaser, but an honest man." Galdez had died of fever; after the priest had anointed him he had asked Will to look after his wife and children. "In fact," said Will, with a twinkle in his eye, "he asked me to marry her, if she'd be willing. And I think I'd have promised, only the Galdez children were twins. Somehow or other it seemed too much to ask as things were; but I promised to look after the mother and the little ones. It wasn't a hard thing to do, as I made several good strikes and kept flush. But the mother and one of the children died of the same fever, which was raging like a lion, before I could reach Laredo, where they were. A priest there wrote to me that Maria, the other one, was a handsome child, and said that he'd see after her bringing-up, if I'd pay the expenses—poor Galdez died before I made the strikes, as poor as a church mouse. Troth, I was glad to get off so easily. I don't know much Spanish, but I think Maria's letters do her credit. And here's the only photograph I have of her. I've never seen her myself; she must be about seventeen now. Some day I'll take you down to San Jacinto and introduce you, my boy."

Bernard looked at a photograph of a fat baby with black eyes. The letters were written in a large, sprawling hand and signed "Maria" with a flourish.

"It seems that the good priest, who is a Spaniard, thinks that Maria ought to learn English, out of compliment to me, and he has hired a Frenchman, his sacristan, to teach her; and this linguist writes me a specimen letter to prove his proficiency. Just read it!"

"SAN JACINTO, April 6, 18—.

"RESPECTFUL SIR: Maria José Galdez is shameful not to possess your astringent language, to thank his benefactor of his kindness ineffable. Maria demands that I to you write this epistle, to you give information of progress. Be not astonish that

in a few months my pupil write so perfectly the English as me; we speak all the day English and with my sister, who late comes from New York, which he has not seen me since we parted a little babee at the eyes blue in Paris. Maria speak so well that the sheepses well comprehend the English, saying 'go lon', and the sheepses 'go lon'.' The good presbyter implore to thank you a hundred thousand times. I hope my composition please you. For me, I would come to see you and bring Maria; but I am coward of the cowboys. With sentiments of the most profound respect, me, I am, your obedient, É. REGNIER."

Bernard laughed. "Maria will speak English well, at this rate."

"Her husband shall teach her," said old Will. "In a year or two I intend to find her an American husband. I wish she could write English, for I can't read her Spanish letters. I'm sure she must be a very pretty girl, for her mother was just like one of those dark-eyed colleens—more power to them!—that I've seen in Waterford."

During the six months that followed this conversation there was a great deal of talk between Will Dempsey and Bernard on the subject of Maria. It was a subject on which the elder man liked to dwell, and which rather bored the younger one. Several letters came from San Jacinto, purporting to be written in English. The rattling up of genders in these missives was appalling. Maria seemed unable to tell the difference between *he* and *she*, much to her guardian's amusement.

Two letters came from New York, both dictated by Mrs. Devir to a friend who wrote after the manner of the Polite Letter-Writer. The tone of these letters, although enriched with ornaments of style by the amanuensis, did not give much comfort to Bernard.

Will Dempsey amazed Bernard by proposing that he should assume the management of the ranch and offering him an interest in the land and flocks. After some talk the veteran said:

"You see Jack's going to be a priest; he has a patrimony, and his uncle will leave him something, too. Now, I've nobody, except Maria Galdez, that has any claim on me. You're a good boy; you've unlearned a lot of useless things here and tried to make me comfortable. Attention! This house is a good house, and I've spared no expense on it; but it needs a woman in it to complete it. How would you like to marry Maria and bring her here?"

Bernard was stunned.

"Couldn't you see that I've been aiming at that all along? Come, now; ride down to San Jacinto and take a look at my little twin. If she likes you, just talk to Padre David and bring her back the wife of the best fellow I know."

"But if she shouldn't like me?"

"Faint heart. Faith, if I were your age I wouldn't throw away the chance of marrying a pretty girl, pleasing a friend, and coming into a place like San Lorenzo Ranch."

Bernard's color rose. The face of Marie Regnier *would* flit across his memory.

"We must have a woman to look after matters here. I can't marry—I'm too old for illusions; you ought to. Is it yes or no?"

"Well, I'll go," said Bernard reluctantly. "Remember, if she doesn't like me I can't help it."

Will Dempsey chuckled. "Padre David will arrange it. Mexican girls are not so particular or so independent as your Americans of the North. She'll like you!"

Bernard did not find this assurance at all consoling. At any rate, he would humor his kind friend's caprice; so he mounted his mustang and started on a day's ride to San Jacinto.

"If she doesn't like you!" cried old Will in stentorian tones, "bring home somebody else. I won't have you here unless you marry a wife." And he chuckled over and over again, muttering against the absurdity of American sentimentalism in regard to marriage.

Bernard's ride was not an enjoyable one. He had not thought about marriage; it had occurred to him that, if he ever married, he would like to have a wife like Marie Regnier. But, in his imagination, he had always sent Marie to a convent.

What if this Miss Galdez *should* take a fancy to him? What? If? Why?—the whole proceeding was ridiculous; and yet not so ridiculous after all, since marriages after this prosaic and practical manner were very common among the Spanish-speaking people around San Lorenzo. Well, he needn't marry her, if he did not like her; and she couldn't marry him in spite of himself. He felt like a fool, and turned back. What was the use of that? Will Dempsey would only laugh at his sentimentalism. He went on, wondering whether Maria Galdez was at all like Marie Regnier or not. He considered Will's photograph of the fat little Galdez baby hideous; but ugly babies are proverbial for becoming pretty.

It was an unpleasant ride; and yet, when the oleanders in front of Padre David's house met his eyes, he was mildly expectant. He looked up and down the road before he dismounted, hoping to catch a glimpse of the young lady before she saw him.

Three people were standing in the garden. One was Padre David, gray-haired and bent, with soutane tucked up around him, reading his breviary. Bernard was anxious to attract his attention quietly. Singular as it may appear, he wanted to get permission to "brush up a little" before the Mexican beauty, who dwelt somewhere in San Jacinto, would see him. The other persons in the garden were a stout, light-haired man who had a spade, and a slim, dark youth who had a book.

The stout man caught sight of Bernard and opened the gate.

"I recognize you, monsieur," he said in French. "You are the friend of whose distinguished features M. Dempsey has been kind enough to send us a portrait. I am Émile Regnier, sacristan of the church here."

Bernard bowed. The sacristan spoke to Padre David, who came forward with a kind smile to shake hands with Bernard.

"And this young gentleman," said the sacristan, with another elaborate bow, "is Señor Maria José Galdez."

Bernard opened his mouth. The slim young man smiled and held out his hand.

"You can't—he can't—she can't—" stammered Bernard—"are you the twin?"

"The only twin," cut in the sacristan, with a bow.

"Is this Maria? I thought there was a lady—"

"This is Maria, the ward of M. Dempsey," interrupted the sacristan, looking a little puzzled. "One will speak the English, if you prefer it. The only lady here is my sister: here she is!"

And from the clump of camellias which shaded the door of the priest's modest cottage came Marie Regnier, carrying Padre David's cup of foaming chocolate. She was brighter and prettier than ever. Her cheeks rivalled the oleander blossoms when she saw Bernard.

"Monsieur Bernard!"

Then there followed more exclamations and explanations, but Bernard was prudently silent. Marie had something to tell Bernard of his mother. It was not much: she had seen his mother at Mass once or twice; but it was pleasant for Bernard to hear.

Bernard was in no hurry to return to San Lorenzo Ranch.

Padre David had many sermons on abstruse theological subjects to read to him, and the good priest, happy in having such an appreciative listener, said :

" Ah! amigo, you ought to have been a Levite; how fortunate would I have been with such an assistant! You ought to have been a priest, my boy."

Bernard shook his head. " It is not God's will, father. My father and mother—especially the dear old mother—longed with a holy and steadfast longing that I might serve the altar. It nearly broke my heart, and I am afraid it broke hers, when I found that I had no vocation. It was the saddest—"

" You had proper direction; you prayed, you—"

" Yes, yes," interrupted Bernard. " My confessor knew me thoroughly, and I prayed with all my heart for light. But it was plain that I had no vocation for the highest, holiest, most difficult calling under heaven. Think what it is to be a priest! And yet, seeing how my mother had set her heart on giving me wholly to God, I was almost tempted to please her. It was the saddest day of my life when I told her it could not be!" Bernard's eyes moistened, and he paused. " O Father David! how beautiful her desire seemed to me. You don't know how she had worked for it half her life, how she had thought of it, prayed for it. But it takes more than even a good mother's will to make a priest. I would have given ten years of my life to make her happy! You see how pure, how unselfish was her ambition."

Padre David thought for a moment. Then he smiled slightly and took a pinch of snuff.

" And now the little Marie Regnier is teaching you to make chocolate in the Mexican fashion! Ah! the poor old mother. But she will live again in her grandchildren and pray that one of them may be a priest."

Bernard reddened and asked Padre David to go on with his sermon—the one for Palm Sunday, which was short.

Bernard Devir, on his return to San Lorenzo Ranch, presented a very amiable and charming person to old Will, to whom he said :

" I have brought back a wife, according to your instructions."

Will Dempsey gradually permitted himself to be captivated by Marie; but for some time he denounced the Mexican fashion of calling " boys by girls' names." He declared he would never forgive the twin for " being a boy." Finally he relented.

The old couple talked many times, after the sharpest grief of Bernard's leaving had been blunted, of the glory of that Commencement Day. Jack Dempsey visited them occasionally, and they were very proud of these visits. He was as jolly as ever, but there was a recollection about him as of an interior but subdued brightness. Again and again Mrs. Dempsey had said, with a sigh :

"Wouldn't his mother be the happy one if she could have lived to get his blessing after his first Mass!"

One day she said to Jack: "I'm afraid the father and me were too anxious about Barney, and may be we worried him a bit. But indeed, Mr. Dempsey, it was only the will of God we wanted done, and it seemed as if he were running against it."

The bitterness of the disappointment seemed to be fading away. So soon as this mother began to feel that her son might be doing the will of God, although not having received the highest grace, she thanked God for his goodness.

When the letter came from San Jacinto, asking the blessing of the father and mother on the marriage of their son, her lip trembled; but she recovered herself.

"Sure," she said, "it was right to wish the best for Bernard; but, if he's got the second-best, let's be thankful. His wife's a good Catholic, anyhow."

"He says himself you were right," said Jack Dempsey, who had brought the letter, "to wish that he should be given to God, and he regrets that he was not worthy of the grace of a vocation to the priesthood."

"Cheer up!" chimed in Mr. Dempsey, as he paused to scold the boy for leaving a bundle of brooms out in the rain. "Cheer up, acushla! Matrimony's a sacrament, and, if Barney has received it worthily, there may be a priest in the family yet!"

Mrs. Devir smiled through her tears.

"And after Mr. Dempsey here is priested we'll take a trip down to see them."

"Well, well, I will, dear," she said; "But Barney belongs to another. I could never think him to be the same boy."

A WOMAN OF CULTURE

CHAPTER I.

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

TOWARDS the close of a certain day in January, some years removed from the present date of writing, a snow-storm was taking place in a Canadian city of note and position in its own country, but little known, save among the mercantile community, in the United States. The storm was one of the old-fashioned kind, when the flakes fell softly and thickly, and thought not of stopping for two days at least; when you could not see to any noticeable distance through the feathery veil, and enjoyed many surprising encounters in consequence; when the air rang with the music of invisible bells and human voices, and when every pleasure-loving heart was bright with the confidence of a month's uninterrupted sleighing. Those were the good old times celebrated in story and in song. Nature's generosity in the shape of a snowy, blowy, freezing winter was equalled only by the generous manner in which the Canadians celebrated its coming. In that city the winter has become a memory of the past, and so many changes have occurred in other respects as to make the period of which we write seem tinged with the romance of a century's distance. Then the woods ran close to the city limits, and occasionally, in spite of aldermanic fiat, still held with their rearguard some of the most popular thoroughfares. Now the virgin forest has fled northward, and only a rim of venerable trees ornaments the surrounding hills, the memorial of decayed glory, and a reproach to the civilization which banished so much of beauty.

The forest had been the guardian of the snow and the rain, and the friend of the rivers. Now the rivers run thin and tremulous to the lakes, shrunk into half their earlier size and deprived of all their loveliness; and the grandchildren of those who looked then with sparkling eyes and beating hearts on the piling snow, or drove day after day in the long winter season through the drifts to the tintinnabulation of the bells—those grandchildren, I say, now wait hopefully and patiently for a storm which will give them one hour of pleasant sleighing, and many days of slushy,

muddy discontent on the four wheels of a brougham. It was a city of simple, homely pleasures in the main, and these abounded to the fullest extent. Nature, like the people, was generous in her giving. In summer there was rain in abundance and cool, dry days; in winter the cold fairly sparkled, and the snow fell as it is falling this moment when the story begins, in showers that left marble appearances as common as in the days of the Roman fame.

It had been snowing for two days, and already the first indications of the clearing up of the storm were becoming apparent in the increasing volume of sleighbell music; in the rout and roar of the school-children whom careful mammas had kept within doors for forty-eight terrible hours; but more than all in the broad banners of light that waved across the snowfall from the west, where the sun was struggling, and not vainly, to throw his strongest winter light on the snow-bound land and the frozen waters of the lake. Forms were becoming more distinct, sudden encounters less numerous, and foot-passengers, although they had severe struggles in the snow-drifts, more venturesome. In those streets where wealth and respectability dwelt, ladies in furs, coachmen in liveries, and gentlemen in greatcoats were coming and going to and from every mansion, so eager were all to greet one another after a long imprisonment of two days. O the cheerful, smiling young faces that shone on every side with a brightness which their hearts had stolen from the returned sun! And the blessed old faces pressed against the windows to see the younger ones departing, with the memories of an earlier and a similar time to lighten up the wrinkles and the fast-dulling eyes! What a sight it was even to the indifferent looker-on! The greetings that were exchanged, loud and ringing as the greetings of their own sleighbells! The pretty cries from the young ladies, and the manly tones of assurance that answered them!

Up and down through the long thoroughfares went the sleighs, a winter mosaic of colored robes and silvered harness and sparkling eyes, crossing and recrossing the same streets, darting into side avenues and appearing again on the fashionable way, turning at times countrywards for a spin on the open roadway, and occasionally moving snail-like through a retired quarter, where nothing had escaped the mould of shabby gentility save undying love. But at one of the most favored points an awkward blockade occurred. It was a wide avenue leading straight to the lake, and bordered just now by the skeletons of trees. The stateliest houses of that time here had their foundations, and the bluest-

blooded of the city here sheltered their stately exclusiveness. On every gate gleamed a silvered inscription, and at every curb was a polished and carved footstone for the horsewomen of the house—for riding was an accomplishment of those days, much as it is now neglected. The blockade was extensive, and began in front of a building whose roomy grounds and numerous towers bespoke unusual wealth for the proprietor. Sleighs were constantly arriving to swell the throng already gathered, and, as the dwelling stood at the intersection of two streets, a goodly and heterogeneous crowd of vehicles was soon ranged northward and westward on the avenues.

The occupants stood on tiptoe of expectation. In the countenances of some not a little alarm was expressed, for a flame had crept from one of the chimneys of the stately dwelling, and was pushing its deft fingers along a part of the roof quite free from snow. The peril was not immediate. Moreover, the servants had come to the rescue, and a sturdy fellow was crawling on hands and knees to the spot of danger.

A little relieved from suspense, the silence of the crowd was soon changed into a murmur, and shortly the readier and more forward began to indulge their wit at the expense of their neighbors. Then the laugh followed, hilarity communicated itself with lightning speed to the whole assemblage, and it became clear that as the danger to the dwelling diminished the necessity of a speedy separation became more urgent. Some of the sleighs began to feel their way through the multitude—a proceeding which gave great offence to the majority, and brought down showers of sarcasms and biting repartee, not always of the most refined sort, upon the occupants. Others, not caring to risk receiving the same attentions, waited in silence and patience for escape from the situation, but showed plainly enough their distress and disgust. Prominent among these was a gentleman in the rear of the crowd, yet not far enough back to retreat in the direction whence he came. His turn-out was stylish and rich, but so subdued in its trappings as to attract more attention and envy from its extraordinary taste and refinement than from its richness. He sat quietly smoking a cigar and throwing contemptuous glances on those around him. They were as contemptuously received as given. The coarser ones did not hesitate to utter some sharp criticisms on his appearance, ambiguous enough, however, to apply to any gentleman in the crowd, and therefore not to be considered personal by any. Their attentions did not disturb his serenity or banish his looks of scorn. When at last

they had become bolder, and their wit was edged with a broader personality, he turned to his companion, who, holding the reins had been as silent as himself, and said in a peculiarly cold, insulting tone: "Answer them, Quip," and returned to his cigar and his contempt.

An expectant rustle among the crowd followed the utterance of these words, a shifting of seats, a craning of necks, and a stretching of ears—as if the answers which Quip had been commanded to make were to be of a crushing and conclusive nature. The individual thus suddenly lifted into notoriety gazed for a moment on the enemy, with one eye shut after the fashion of a sage jackdaw, and then shook himself as though arranging a set of ill-natured feathers. His appearance was peculiar. The narrowness of his head and face, the Roman prominence of his nose, the backward curve of his forehead, and the surprising length of his neck gave him the air of a wise old bird. His eyes were deep-set, brilliant, and hard in expression, and his hair, dark and thick, hung straight as an Indian's over his neck. He had been eyeing the wits for some time in expressive though constrained silence. He had not, however, uttered a word, and the permission or command of the gentleman with whom he sat woke him to no further demonstration of eagerness than that which I have compared to an arranging of ill-natured feathers. The enemy seized upon the gentleman's words as a veritable challenge, and, without waiting to inspect their antagonist, crossed swords in an instant.

"Come out, Mr. Quip," said a horsey-looking youth in the distance; "unfold yourself, my hearty, to the public gaze. Don't be bashful, Mr. Quip. You'll be handled as gently as a fresh muffin." "Come out!" chorussed the jokers of minor degree. "I'm a-comin'," the gentleman answered glibly. "I like to be sure of a welcome, though. I'm poor, and there doesn't seem to be enough among the whole of you to invest in a square meal. I'm here," concluded Mr. Quip modestly, with a knowing wink at an old gentleman who was in convulsions across the way. "What are you fed on?" inquired a fast youth in an eye-glass. "Matches," said Quip; "and I blaze when rubbed against hard substances. You needn't be afraid to touch me, Johnny, for you're too soft to stand on your own legs. You shouldn't be out without your papa." "A crack in a door wouldn't be harder to photograph than you, dear Mr. Quip," lisped the other. "In a small establishment you are just the one to fill up the corners that nobody uses from being too small to get into." "Perhaps you'd like to hire me," said Mr. Quip. "No, no; yet I could

assure you of more food than you get in your present quarters." "More food to look at, perhaps; but I can do that every hour in the windows of butchers and grocers. You judge, Johnny, like a votary of the superficial world. You may feast on sirloin and honey, as it is said by the poet, and yet you can find people to swear that you are starved. But get a ten-cent dinner at a Dutch eating-house, borrow or beg a stylish rig which you never intend to pay for, and you are supposed to live on the fat of the land." And the gentleman, heaving a profound sigh, next burst into a series of explosive cackinnations that set all the horses prancing. "Now take my advice, dear friends," he continued blandly, as he saw indications of a break in the blockade: "pay your debts in this world, or the devil will collect them in the next, and he exacts a hundred per cent.; don't take it hard that some men can ride in their own carriages while you must steal one or walk—the world is full of such inequalities of fortune, and your satisfaction is that an hour must come when all will ride in the same kind of a coach; lastly, keep a civil tongue in your heads on all occasions. Adieu."

The front rank of the blockade had broken as Mr. Quip finished his moral discourse with a prodigious wink in the direction of the friendly old gentleman. All the sleighs were in motion. Down and across two avenues the stream went pouring, the horses snorting and plunging gladly at their release from unwilling bondage, and the ladies and gentlemen sparkling and glowing, as to cheeks and eyes and conversation, with redoubled fervor. Mr. Quip's enemies endeavored to make reply to his last onslaught when the movement reached their vicinity; but the bird-like fellow had already received his orders from his master, and with a bow of scornful politeness towards them, and a last and powerful wink at the merry old gentleman, had turned off into the drive of those grounds where stood the mansion so lately threatened with destruction. Another sleigh had driven to the door, and as the doctor—for of the medical profession Mr. Quip's master turned out to be—alighted and came slowly up the steps its late occupant disappeared within the house.

Within the lamps had just been lighted, and their soft brilliancy fell upon the panelled walls and rich adornments of the rooms with an effect that took the eye of the physician mightily, although he had seen it all many times. Everything was in perfect taste, and in keeping with the reputed wealth and fine social position of the man whose good fortune it was to hold the

highest business reputation in the city. Doctor Killany looked around him with the air of one accustomed to live and move among such luxuries, and he seemed more absorbed in the impatience of waiting than in actual observation of the costly comforts under his eye. Yet at that moment no picture could have been more distinct in the doctor's mind than that of the miserable, dingy bachelor rooms—miserable and dingy for his tastes and ambition, wretched by comparison with all this magnificence—which his income could with difficulty support in their tawdry grandeur. The doctor was a handsome man, not extraordinarily good-looking, but with the personal beauty which regular features, fine teeth, bright eyes, a good figure, and a polished manner can give to the most ordinary mortals. His complexion was too uniformly pale to please, and a certain pinched expression of some of the features gave a rather sinister touch to his countenance. The eyes shifted too often from one object to another. The mouth had about it the faintest suspicion of cruelty, and in his moments of meditation his brow fell to glowering with the ferocity of a Catiline. His head was intellectual in shape and size, and rested proudly on his shoulders, but the jaw was too massive to make the effect complete, whatever firmness it gave to his expression. Standing under the glare of the lamps, Doctor Killany appeared no ordinary personage. No one would forget to take a second glance at his pale face and elegant form, wondering, perhaps, that one so favored by nature should be so little favored by grace.

The servant came shortly to usher him into the library, where Mr. McDonell awaited him.

The merchant sat in his easy-chair, near the grate, his face partly hidden by a newspaper, which he did not lay aside at the entrance of his visitor. He was an old man, if judged by the whiteness of his hair and the wrinkles of his face. Care and weariness were its prevailing expression, and these qualities seemed to deepen and broaden when Doctor Killany had entered, and, walking to the mantel, stood with one arm upon the marble shelf in an attitude of superb and yet insufferable familiarity. He was smiling down upon the white-haired gentleman, who, without removing his eyes from the paper, contrived to say :

“Will you not be seated, doctor? I suppose you are to stay for dinner.”

“Thank you,” the doctor answered, “but my stay must be rather short. If you could give me your attention for a few moments I would be deeply grateful.”

The slightest shade of annoyance passed over McDonell's face as he answered :

"It is not of so much value, sir, that your gratitude should be at all aroused. Do sit down."

"Thank you again," said the doctor smoothly ; "but please excuse me. I must feel grateful—extremely so. The minutes of a business man, I have heard, represent so many dollars."

"In business hours, perhaps, but not now, not now," returned the other, with visibly restrained impatience.

Doctor Killany drummed the mantel with his fingers for a few moments, and stared at the opposite wall. "You had a narrow escape a short time ago. I saw it from the street ; the roof was blazing prettily, and the avenues were blockaded."

"It might have been an awkward thing for us," McDonell said, "if the engines of the fire department had become necessary."

"So I thought. Miss Nano was in one avenue and I in the other. Neither was able to approach. Imagine our sensations."

"They must have been painful," said McDonell, with an amused smile.

"Indeed, indeed they were ; but, pardon my abruptness, I have come to speak of your daughter."

The older gentleman put aside his paper at this, folded his hands, and looked into the doctor's shifting eyes so long as they remained fastened on him. It was an attitude of confident defiance.

"I allow you," he said, with a blandness which did not quite conceal the peremptoriness of his tones, "to associate with Nano, to dine with her, to ride with her. I trust you have not the sublime impudence to desire any closer relations."

"To be plain with you, I have cherished such desires," said the doctor humbly, "but subject both to your permission and to Miss Nano's in their expression. I am not a susceptible man, but your daughter's intellect, beauty, and—"

"Her wealth and position," broke in the other.

"Her wealth and position," continued Killany, undisturbed, "were a combination of good qualities which neither my heart—"

"Nor your interest."

"Nor my interest, if you will so have it, could easily pass over ; and being once prisoner so favorably, you may be sure I am not anxious to escape from my chains."

"Not while the chains are golden, I'll be bound," laughed McDonell. "But you will never have from me—"

"I beg of you, sir," interrupted the doctor, with a warning gesture, "for your own sake not to make any declarations which it may pain you to retract before I leave."

His manner was gentle and smooth as usual, but contained a threat in its very smoothness.

"Your confidence would be amusing," said McDonell, growing a shade paler, "if the matter were less serious or our relations other than they are."

But he did not continue his interrupted speech.

"Precisely," the doctor murmured; "and it is on the strength of these relations that I stand before you to-night. As a distant relative of the rich merchant I might have held a precarious social position in this city and country; but as a poor professional I would not have dared to look up to the heiress with the boldness I at present assume. You see I am frank."

"It is one of your shining qualities," the merchant answered. "Yet, if you would deign to receive a little advice from me, do not presume too much on this secret matter. Poverty is a great misfortune, but not the greatest, and I would suffer it in preference to many things. Besides, it has often occurred to me that restitution might as well be made now to those I have wronged as when I am on my death-bed. It must be made in any event."

"Are there any to whom you could make it?" asked the doctor, with careless but cunning indifference.

"That is not to the point," the merchant replied, resting his head heavily on his hand; "if they do not live it goes to the poor."

"Have you thought of your daughter in this?"

McDonell raised himself haughtily, and threw an angry glance at the doctor.

"I understand you," he said coldly. "But Nano will not fail to follow her father into poverty, if it be necessary."

"And so to live after him?" questioned Killany, with the slightest suspicion of a sneer in his smiling face. "You do not know your daughter, Mr. McDonell. In spite of her philosophical pursuits, which she pretends teach her to despise everything; in spite of the careful education you have given her at the hands of strangers, Miss Nano has a high appreciation of the advantages of wealth. She has no religion. In fact, she despises all religions. A kind of philosophical morality has usurped re-

ligion's place. I believe that, if it were required, she would, as Christians say, peril her soul to retain this wealth."

McDonell stood up, his face as white as the marble mantel, his breath coming in short, quick gasps.

"You lie!" he whispered, "you lie, you lie, you lie!"

The doctor smiled at his anger and earnestness. The agony of the father found no sympathy in his heart. An atheist himself, he could not see in the principles which it pleased Miss Nano to profess anything inconsistent with the ordinary standard of virtue. He said nothing in answer to the intensely bitter and insulting words of McDonell, but busied himself with the papers, while the merchant, bowing his head upon the mantel, endeavored to recover from the sudden storm of anguish which had swept over his soul. During the silence that intervened neither saw the face which for a moment looked in through the partly-open door, and was reflected darkly mournful on the mirrors opposite. When the gentlemen resumed their conversation it was gone.

"Tell me why you have come here to-night," said McDonell, composedly taking his seat. "What more do you ask for?"

"The smallest of favors," said Killany; "and I have never been exacting, considering what I know."

"Considering what you know," returned the other sharply, "it was politic to have asked but little."

"Is it nothing," said the doctor, angered by the old man's tone out of his own calmness, "to know that the wealthy and stainless citizen, connected with the best families of the province, and a rising power in the political world, is, if justice were done, not much better than a pauper and the basest of criminals?"

"Proof, proof, sir!" cried the merchant.

"There I am weak," the doctor acknowledged. "I cannot drag you before the public tribunals, I cannot blast your name with actual disgrace. But society, the world, is exacting. A word, and your name is indelibly stained. Before the world's courts you will stand a criminal, tried and condemned, and, moreover, there will be no appeal. Do you care to risk that?"

"For Nano's sake, no," McDonell said; "and yet, as I have said of poverty, it is a great misfortune, but there are misfortunes still greater."

"To return to the object of this interview," said Killany—"and, I pray, leave off your silly innuendoes—I want your permission to woo your daughter honorably. It shall be in her power to reject me. I do not ask your influence—no, not even your neutrality."

From me she shall never hear of the unfortunate relations that exist between us, and if you choose to leave her penniless at your death-hour it shall make no difference for me. Can anything be fairer? Could you desire more in the wealthiest son-in-law?"

"Nothing more," McDonell answered carelessly. "I accept your conditions, and, further, there shall be no interference on my part. You have told me that I do not know my daughter. In the respects you have mentioned I do not, and trust that those hideous deformities of character may be as wanting in her as they are glaring in you. But this I do know," and a smile of loving, fatherly confidence lighted for a moment the gentleman's haggard face: "she will never marry you. Oh! you may exercise the ingenuity and cunning of a devil, but she will never marry *you*."

"I take all risks," the doctor said gaily. "'Faint heart never won fair lady.' Behold me in a twelvemonth your honored son-in-law."

"I shall bid you good-evening," the merchant said wearily. "You have obtained your request. I would say, may you regret the hour when you first asked it, but that I am sure you will."

"Good-evening, sir," the doctor coolly responded. "I would also say, may you regret the hour in which you first granted it, but that I am sure you will. Your servant, sir."

And he bowed himself, smiling and triumphant, out of the room. For some moments Mr. McDonell remained in his drooping posture at the table. Then he rose and surveyed his face at the glass.

"It must have been truth," he said with a sigh, "or it never would have struck home so keenly. O my child! my child! Through you God will punish me for my desertion of the orphans, for my desertion of the faith he gave to me and my fathers, for my love of power and wealth; above all, my child, that I did not bestow on you, motherless, the care and love that was your right. I must suffer doubly in your sufferings and my own. O my God!" and he clasped his hands in convulsive agony and fell on his face to the floor, "let me bear all! The wronged shall be righted; I shall repent through all my remaining years; but spare, oh! spare my child."

THE darkness of night had come on during the interview between the doctor and McDonell, and in all the rooms of the mansion the lamps had been lighted and the last ray of daylight shut out by the closing of shutters and curtains. In all the rooms save one. On the second floor the apartments of the lady of the house were situated—elegant and luxurious chambers, where wealth and art had joined hands, under one of skilled and tasteful eye, to make everything beautiful. Here were no lights. The curtains were still up and the blinds open. Only the cold light of stars shone through the window, and a soft gloom rested like a veil on the dimmed outlines of statues and busts and stately furniture.

On a low ottoman the lady herself was seated. She was looking up towards the sky with her hands clasped on her knee, motionless as her own statues, and more beautiful even in that twilight, which was strong enough to light up the lines of a fair, classic face and be reflected from large, soul-filled eyes. She had sat there just as she is sitting now since that moment when her ears had heard the scornful words of Dr. Killany to her father, and, looking into the library, she had caught a glimpse of a tableau which for an instant sent a spasm of pain through her form. She was thinking over the sneering sentences, and trying in a feeble way to feel angry at the indignant, passionate, agonized denial her father had made. She was wondering, too, at the attitude of humiliation he seemed to hold towards Killany, whose manner, though highly respectful and considerate, seemed flip-pant, and even impudent, in the presence of agony so keen and distressing. And between the two meditations she was confused, vexed, and restless.

The principles which Killany had represented her as holding were those to which she had given utterance many times, and had spoken of proudly as the true basis of life's enjoyment and usefulness, perhaps even its truth. For some reason she was annoyed then at finding they belonged to her; whether from the scornful manner in which Killany had mentioned them, or from a conviction that, when stripped of the glamour of cultured conversation and stated in plain English, their beauty and solidity were not so apparent, she could hardly tell. Perhaps it was not so much from

either of these causes her annoyance proceeded as from the impression which her father's bitter indignation and grief had made. In the circle of her friends such declarations as these were received with applause and admiration, quoted again and again, and were called the free expressions of a mind liberated from the slavery of custom and superstition. Yet here was a man, not at all given to piety, and totally averse in his outward actions to the superstitions of creeds, who, at mention of the fact that his child professed such doctrines, or negations of doctrine, must needs act as if a serpent had risen in his path, and stretch out his hands and roll his eyes in horror, and insult outrageously the person who gave the information. And this man was her father. He, who had never shown to her one-tenth part of a father's care and affection, found all his paternal heart racked and torn as it would not be if she lay dead in the stately house. She thought of this confusedly, and was a long time in clearing away the extraordinary mental fog in which it involved her. She went over aloud, one by one, the assertions of Killany, in order by this means to discover what in his language could reasonably cause her annoyance and her father pain.

“‘She has a high appreciation of the advantages of wealth,’ he asserted. And what is there in the world,” she said, with her eyes still fixed on the patch of sky, “which has a more powerful or extensive influence? Virtue is supposed to be the only power able to cope successfully with it, and yet virtue has a price and can be bought for gold. They who have it not would give their honesty to obtain it. They who have it would peril all to retain it. Love and hatred are its handmaids, and the passions generally bow before it. To be rich is to be divine, and Croesus was a god. If there were any meaning in these creeds, if their hereafter were but a certainty, one could afford to smile at the ups and downs of fortune. If it is a reproach to appreciate that which is most appreciable, then, Christians, despise your heaven. Wealth and station are mine, and why should I love them less?”

“‘She has no religion—in fact, despises all creeds,’ he said. And is it not true? And if true, what reproach is it for me? The mummeries of Romanists and the quarrellings of Protestants—what have they which can allure any but the most ignorant minds or the most bewitched? I have no religion, if to despise the world's superstitions be that; but my heart is human, the love of my race is my religion—the religion of humanity, of culture, of refinement.

“‘I would peril my soul to retain this wealth.’ Not so fast.

There he was wrong. I have no soul in the sense which is theirs—a part of me which is to live in eternity, and as it has lived in time, so suffer or rejoice when time is ended. *That* the mightiest intellects of the world have looked upon as a myth. I peril nothing, for I have nothing to peril. But oh! if it were true beyond dispute that I had an immortal soul, what would I care for wealth or honors? Is there a God? Christians and I say yes. Are we accountable to that Being for all our actions? Christians and I say yes again. We differ only as to his personality. Their God is an impossibility, beautiful but intangible and unapproachable. Mine is a reality which begins and ends in time—myself. Why should I feel annoyed at hearing truths uttered? The doctor knows too much; and yet not too much, for all that he said I have many times repeated before my friends. My father is more childish on these points than could be supposed in one so indifferent. I have no God, no religion, in the bad sense which moderns have given these words. I love wealth and power, and despise and dread poverty and weakness. What if ever they should claim me, who detest them so much?"

In the whirl of distressing thought which this idea brought upon her she allowed her head to sink low on her breast and said no more. Later the servant entered quietly and lighted the lamps in the rooms. She rose then and stood before the mirror, as her father had done a few moments before in the painful solitude of the library. The face and form reflected there, in spite of the suspicion of care that rested on the brow, were very, very beautiful, and she smiled her approbation.

"Let them speak of you as they may," she said, with a harsh laugh, "let them think of you meanly or kindly, you have that which will subdue the fiercest of them—beauty, and birth, and wealth, and intellect. You may be wicked, an' atheist, and unprincipled, but those qualities can gloss over so-called defects. And yet, poor figure! you have no stability. You want a soul. Your beauty will fade and crumble through disgusting rottenness into dust. There should be an immortal part of you to preserve that which is so frail yet beautiful. Would that this much of Christian superstition had some truth! If I had been educated differently perhaps—"

She broke off abruptly, seated herself on the ottoman, and gave herself once more to thought. Her last words were the keynote to her meditations. She was reviewing her past life, its successive steps, and the scenes of her youth and girlhood rose up before her with the painful distinctness which belongs to sor-

rowful memories. The twenty-four years of her existence had nothing in them to interest the general world, but to those who look upon a human life as infinitely more precious than numberless worlds the slightest incident in the career of one who presented so complete a spiritual wreck as Nano McDonell, the most trifling causes that worked upon the moulding of that haughty, inconsistent, and brilliant mind, were things of startling importance and worth.

The grave and often harsh expression that rested habitually on her face, the melancholy that always lurked in her eyes when the gayety or excitement of a moment had passed, were indications of a nature which at some time during its formation had suffered, perhaps insensibly, yet severely. Her mother had died in her infancy. To the child it was not a great loss, for the merchant's wife was as shallow a creature as ever breathed, spending her days in foolish intrigues to prevent her husband from returning to the "superstitions which he had rejected," and to induce him to attend the High-Church worship. Her ideas of fulfilling the offices of wife and mother went no farther than the bearing of children and the hiring of nurses, the mere animal instinct of caring for the young being absent from her nature, and the higher notions concerning the duties of a Christian mother utterly undeveloped. Her daughter would have found in her a hindrance rather than a guide in her efforts to escape from the maze into which she had fallen. Miss Nano was therefore ushered into the world under severe conditions. Her father had deserted his faith to obtain his present position of wealth and influence, and though his hair had grown prematurely white through remorse, yet to retain that position he had not scrupled to use fraud, and he had resolutely turned his back to the church which his heart sighed for and his reason acknowledged. He was indifferent to Nano. Business cares were of more importance to him than the care of the little child who was to inherit his property. Nurses and governesses were supplied at proper intervals, and the boarding-school received her when she had thrown aside her pinafores and taken to forbidden books and unlimited candy. She had been a trial to every one with whom she had come in contact. Her proud, violent, untaught nature burst forth regularly in childish rebellions, too serious in their consequences to governesses to make these indulgent ladies bring the case before the proper authority, her father. They coaxed and wheedled while Miss Nano tyrannized. She had a passion for books, and read everything, from the histories of Prescott down to the New

York Ledger, then in its infancy; refused imperiously to study the catechism or learn her prayers; laughed scornfully at the idea of a bad place or a devil; and went to the fashionable church under protest and through fear of her father.

He was not distant with her nor unkind. They chatted occasionally at the table. She made him little presents, which found their way to a waste-basket as regularly as received, but on her finding some of them in an ash-heap she put an end to these little tokens of a child's tender love. Sometimes she sat on his knee or drove out with him in the state carriage; but his preoccupation on these occasions, and his indifference to what she said or did, rendered her pleasure insipid, and often turned it into pain.

It did not require years of such behavior to separate them and to chill in her heart the lively affection she naturally felt towards him. But it remained for the boarding-school to put the finishing touches to the work which ill-training and neglect had so well begun. The teachers of the institution to which she was sent were of the transcendental school, were great admirers of Margaret Fuller and Emerson, and had each a master passion, in ministering to which they spent the greater part of their lives. All were disciples of culture, yet professed as much of Christianity as was consistent with their broad principles, and could satisfy the less visionary parents whose daughters were entrusted to their charge, and who required some show at least of the prevailing religion in the general make-up of the young ladies. In their philosophy Christianity meant culture, or the worship of the beautiful, the worship of mind as impressed on matter in the production of graceful statuary, solemn temples, fine paintings, musical compositions, and startling books. According to their ideas they retained the cream of Christianity, leaving the skim milk to the various creeds, and they spoke and wrote of Catholic doctrines in a peculiar fashion. Beauty was their standard of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood.

It was Nano's misfortune to fall into the hands of these self-worshippers. There was no doubt of the plastic material existing in the half-wild, impulsive, talented creature, and it submitted to the moulding process with wonderful meekness. For three years she walked with them through such mazes of absurdity and learning as it never occurred to the greatest or most erratic of scholars and philosophers to tread. The poetry and philosophy, the antiquities and religions, of all nations in all times were the objects of pretty and superficial investigation. The graduates

could spout more mythology in an ordinary conversation than an Oxford professor, and all talked learnedly of the Zendavesta, of Confucius and his maxims, of the Aristotelian theories, of the Copernican system, and of the philosophy of the eighteenth century according to Cousin. The habit of referring all disputed questions, however profound, to the decision of the cultured mind, to be decided not on its merits, which might or might not be a simple impossibility, but on its congruousness with the standards set up by transcendentalism, tended to create an excessive self-love in the pupils. The worship of self quite naturally supplanted the worship of the Deity, and a disastrous moral blindness followed.

Three years in such an atmosphere for a girl of Nano's sort meant spiritual death. When her education was finished, and she returned to rule as mistress of her father's house, Nano was fairly enlisted in the ranks of atheism. "Strivings after the unattainable" were become quite as much the strong points in her character as they were in the characters of those with whom she had so long associated; and by degrees her nature underwent the revolting but expected change which the sentiments she has just uttered indicate.

After the last-spoken words of the lady she remained for a long time in the same attitude of dejection and disturbed thought. The scenes of her life in the past were not pleasant memories. So deep and absorbing was her meditation that a gentle knock at the door, though twice repeated, passed unheeded. Even the opening of the door a moment later, and the entrance of a young, bright-looking lady in walking costume, were not enough to wake her from her reveries; and for a few moments the new-comer stood under the chandelier directly behind Nano, watching her bowed form reflected in the mirror. Then she stole forward, put her arms around Nano's neck and her lips to her cheek in a familiar but respectful way, saying:

"Always solitary, always thinking! Wrapped up in your contemplation of Hindoo deities or mythologies, Nano, when you should be getting into a pleasant excitement over the latest style of our winter hats."

Nano looked up and caught the gentle hands in her own, all her moodiness vanishing on the instant.

"Little witch, you are as mysterious in your comings and goings as the Roman—"

The witch put one hand quickly over the lady's mouth.

"No, do not mention one of those heathen deities. Have you

not promised me? And I would as lief be compared to a monkey as to a heathen goddess."

"I did forget my promise," said Nano, "but for the first and last time. Yet I was not thinking of the goddesses when you came in, but of some very practical things which do not often occur to me, as you will easily believe. I had said aloud, just before you entered, what a terrible thing would it be to become poor."

"Not so very terrible," said the girl slowly and with such a serious face that Nano laughed chidingly.

"Let us talk of more cheerful things," she said. "Now that I am to lose my companion, our parting must be made in a merry mood. Life has so little of what is actually pleasant in it that it is not good to borrow trouble. Now tell me of that young prodigy, your brother the doctor. Has he opened his office yet, and have you made all your arrangements? Oh! what shall I do without my companion? Sweet Olivia, where shall I find such another as you?"

"You can purchase anything for gold," said Olivia slyly.

"Very true, dear, if the 'anything' exists, which in this case I doubt. No other shall supply your place. It would remind me too much of my loss."

"Loss!" echoed Olivia. "Say rather gain. The companion has become a friend."

"True again. But you have not told me of your brother."

"He is quite well, thank you, and already at work. His shingle was hung out yesterday—Henry Fullerton, in gilt letters—and the sweetest music I ever heard was the swinging song of that shingle last night. I would not let Harry tie it down."

"Has he had any professional calls yet? The music ought to bring them, if nothing else."

"Yes and no," said Olivia, hesitating and gently blushing. "An old friend called on him to-day and lunched with us. You must know him—Sir Stanley Dashington, a baronet and quite wealthy."

"I know him, dear," said the lady blandly. "He is very handsome and very rich and very sensible. He is a Catholic, too, like yourself, and lives in some delightful place called Ballynabochlish, Ireland. I see he has wounded your heart already, and I know you have known him a long time. You deserted me; my revenge will be to help you to desert your brother also."

"My going will not surprise him," answered the young lady calmly. "It is to be expected, and I would soon be superfluous in the Fullerton household. My brother will get married some day, I suppose."

"And you must set him the example! Christian modesty, forsooth!"

"Christian modesty, forsooth!" repeated the young lady. "What in the world has my getting married to do with Christian modesty? I would give your transcendental doctrines a shot for that gratuitous attack, but really I have nothing to say. I have shown up their foolishness and absurdity, and I can't go any farther. To talk transcendentalism is to talk nonsense. Do put your theories of the beautiful into some practice. If you *must* worship beauty, come out to-morrow and worship the latest styles. Such colors, such—"

"In that way," interrupted Nano, frowning, "you always treat those things which with me are so serious. Do you suppose that I care for these vanities?"

"Ah! Nano," cried the young lady, "if you indulged your woman's vanity a little more, and your aspirations after the unattainable a little less, your life would not be the blunder it is. Why, the philanthropists, as they call themselves, ridiculous as their talk and actions are, do some good in the world, but your school is the most useless yet discovered."

"School is a hateful name," said Nano. "I am bound by no such fetters. My principles are truly Catholic. Whatever is good I love, and I try to assimilate to myself all good. Is there any nobler work than trying to make one's self better?"

"None, if you proceed in the right way," returned Olivia with much earnestness. "But to build and destroy at the same time is not making one's self better. You are doing that. You have deprived yourself of a soul, and of the eternal home of that soul. You believe in no God, no heaven, no accountability. You have gone farther. You have made yourself a god, and set yourself up in His place who made you and claims your homage. And while you have been doing all this that kind and talented soul whose existence you deny has struggled hard to save you from ruin. Have I not witnessed and calmed its tumult many a time? But you looked upon it as only the struggling of your worse nature, and resolutely put it down. Now the evidence of the conflict appears in your sadnesses and unrests, in your melancholy expression and manner. O Nano, dear Nano!" and Olivia, rising from her seat, threw her arms once more around her friend, "in the last moments of your life that which you have conquered now will rise up like a giant, speak with tongues of thunder what you now deny, and render you the unhappiest of women. Take warning, dear, in time. Your intellect if applied but for a little

to the search for the truth, your great pride if humbled ever so little before God's goodness and power, would bring you out of trouble into peace."

"I would smile, child," said Nano, not in the least moved by her friend's earnestness, "but that you are so serious. Nothing can ever take from me the convictions that now are mine. There is no other refuge, and I look for none. Death is the end of all—beautiful, mysterious death."

"Beautiful, mysterious death!" repeated Olivia. "Beautiful to him who looks upon it as the entrance to a better life, but terrible to those who see only its flowers and lights and fancied peace; mysterious only to the pagan and the atheist. For us One who went that way and returned has laid bare all its mysteries."

"Mysterious withal," said Nano, closing her eyes as if to call up some forgotten image. "The sea is a secret thing, and the frozen North, and the human heart; but none express such strange mystery as the faces of the dead. Oh! to see them lying there in everlasting repose, the seal of an eternal silence upon their lips, all sense seeming to be turned inward upon themselves, as if they were listening to and seeing and enjoying such things as this world never knew, and from which no foolish, worldly pleasure can draw them ever again! Mysterious death!"

Both were for some moments silent.

"God of mercy," thought Olivia in agony, as she listened to the words and saw the looks of her friend, "that such a soul should be lost to thee!"

Then she said aloud:

"I am growing impatient, Nano, and despondent. I shall talk with you no more about these things. Your uncertain transcendentalism is too gloomy. It is best to leave you to—to—"

"Well?" questioned the lady when Olivia stopped.

"Why should I mention One whose existence you deny? I was about to say, to God."

"As I should say—to myself."

Olivia put her hand to her ears and expressed in her face terror and disgust.

"Oh! do not speak so," she gasped; "I shudder for you, dear, if God left you to the mercy of such a divinity. It is one of his punishments, and the most terrible."

"It is destined to be mine, then," said Nano, with a poor attempt at gayety. "But there is the bell for tea. Let us go down together. My father has not yet heard of your new departure."

TO BE CONTINUED.